



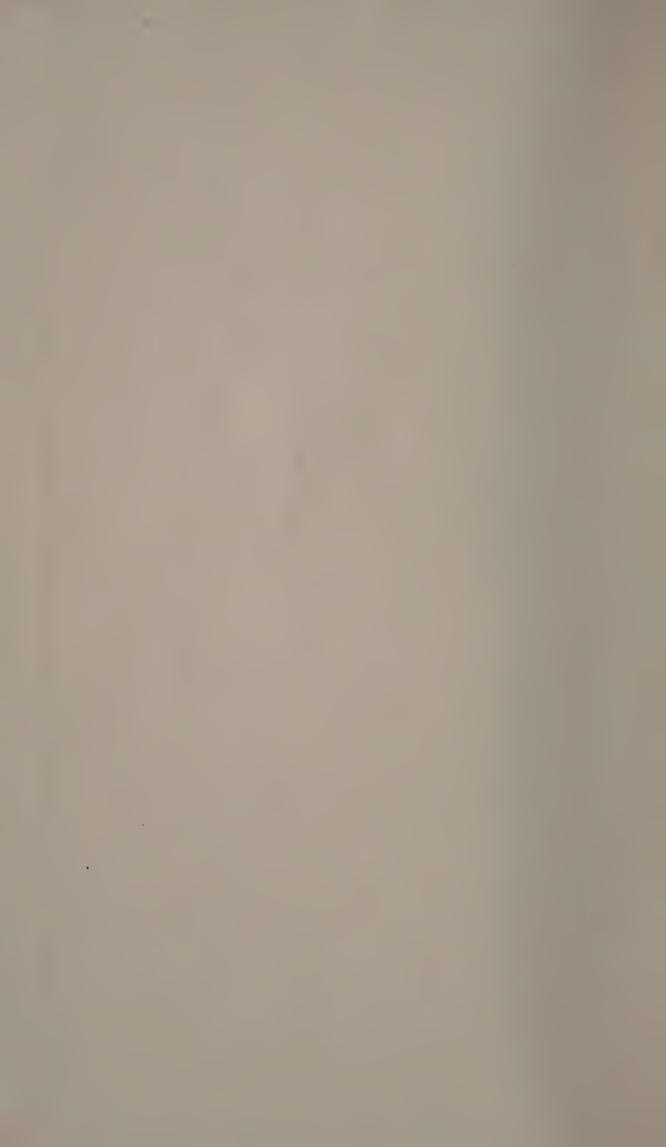
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FATE AND A MARIONETTE

BY

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"THE GARDEN IN THE WILDERNESS," "THE SMILING ROAD,"
"LET'S MAKE A FLOWER GARDEN," ETC.



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FATE AND A MARIONETTE

CHAPTER I

THE last moment, the end of anything, must inevitably be written in minor.

We remember only the best—forgetting in the sentiment-freighted moments of finality the heartaches, disappointments, ashes. The last hours in the most sordid of dwellings become invested with regret—regrets for the brave hopes, the fires of enthusiasm, the evanescent hours of happiness, which its grim walls have encompassed.

So it was that Jerry Middleton looked about the dingy room of his insalubrious London lodging with the heartache of farewell. He had dreamed fair dreams there. He had stared at the dirty brown wall-paper and concocted courageous plans with the arrogance of youth; he had warmed his soul with the flame of determination, as his body had shivered over the discouraged, unambitious, small fire in the tiny grate.

The distorting, cheap mirror had so often reflected the last touches to a toilet carefully planned to give a fictitious air of prosperity, and to a face really illumined by a new day of fresh hopefulness.

The three framed religious mottoes on the wall had become endurable and almost dear with that ineffable something bred of familiarity.

And this was the room in which his great thought had come—The Solution.

He went to the grimy, fly-specked, rain-spotted window and stared down upon the ugly vehicles and lorries of Lisson Grove. He looked over at the Florence Nightingale Hospital and thought of the wistful-eyed, red-haired little nurse whom he had sometimes noticed gazing out unseeing, as one fighting some hopeless problem. She had once looked up and her glance had collided with his observing eye. He had smiled, not flirtatiously, but in a sort of touch-on-the-shoulder, hand-clasp fashion—the lip and eye message of a fighter to a fellow-soldier. Jerry wished she were at the window to-day. Perhaps she would have given him a smile for luck.

He thought, a trifle wistfully, of his only acquaintance on the street, the polite little old man in the antique shop, where he had so frequently gone to look about, admire, covet, but never to purchase.

He even thought, with a kindly tolerance, of his rusty-gowned, oily-faced, dirty-finger-nailed landlady. On the dressing-table lay an envelope addressed to her. It contained all he owed and one pound more—a generosity made possible by the sale of his overcoat that morning and the fact that he kimself would now have no imaginable use for the extra pound.

His landlady had always distrusted and disliked him, because he was an American. Of course she'd think him queerer than ever now—think him as mad as a spinning white mouse. Perhaps he was. Undoubtedly, from her point of view, and that probably of all other sane people—especially the English sane—he was on the verge of doing a perfectly mad thing. Yes, to nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of a thousand it would seem utterly mad.

"But," thought Jerry, "the nine hundred and ninety-nine would acknowledge themselves mashed if the Tank of Fate had passed over and over

them. That's where the difference lies. I don't feel mashed. I don't mash. How do I get that way? Dunno. S'pose it's because I'm American."

Jerry mentally shrugged his shoulders—an outward and inward habit he had developed in France—and said aloud, as his thoughts shrugged, "C'est la vie." As he proceeded to disgorge the contents of his

As he proceeded to disgorge the contents of his pockets he wrenched himself free from the last trace of gloom due to impending departure from things accustomed, and broke into a whistle. The notes of that classic war song known as "Parlez vouz" (which is not heard in drawing-rooms) filled the room with an atmosphere of insouciant cheeriness and irresponsibility.

Whistling, he read over the various addresses of men of affairs scribbled on many slips of paper. How much gilt-edged hope each name had held out at one time or another. He walked over to the grate, which had become the crematory of his past, and flung the addresses on top of the smouldering remains of burnt letters.

A silver cigarette-case was reluctantly drawn forth. He stared wistfully at its gold-lined emptiness.

"Wish to the Lord I hadn't had my monogram put on it," thought he. "That piece of bull condemns it too. Can't have anything with 'J. E. M.' found on me, which reminds me . . . 'Cash' name, maker's and laundry marks must all be got off my clothes."

He disrobed, thinking meanwhile what a difficult business it was, this blotting out all evidences of one's identity. Human beasts may not be branded as are the cattle, but they are pretty indelibly marked in one way or another, all the same.

It was even difficult to find a virginal handkerchief, one free from all evidence of former possession.

He walked toward the bed on which sat an open

travelling-bag. Beside it lay a few articles of clothing, two books-John Burroughs' Time and Change-Locke's Wonderful Year-and a small box. He opened the box. It held but a medal and bit of ribbon, but it held Jerry Middleton's entire pride of memory. It was the Croix de Guerre. As he stared down upon the decoration, he re-lived an hour in a French hospital, and some later minutes on a certain field; there came a hitherto unknown tightening of the throat, as two large tears split over the surprised lashes of his eyes. With a characteristic American horror of sentimentality, he smeared the tears into a general dampness and flung the box and its contents into the tomb of the bag. It was the crude burial of his most treasured souvenir, the burial also of his last scruple, his conscience. . . .

All the oddments on the bed followed the medal into the bag. He then helped himself to the two bricks, which an economical landlady had placed on either side of the grate to reduce its coal-holding capacity to still more Lilliputian dimensions.

What to do with the bag now it was packed, weighted, and locked was, to use Jerry's expression, enough to ball one up. Then suddenly there came to his memory a stagnant-looking canal once passed on a fruitless search for a job in Maida Vale.

"It's a long, long way," he sighed, then braced up, as he added, "What am I thinking of? I don't need to wear out my new kicks footing it now. When a fellow's giving himself a sort of ta-ta outing, what's a bus fare or two?"

One thing only remained to be done—remove the moustache and beard which he had grown some months earlier in order to give an otherwise too youthful countenance the tone of maturity. These tonsorial adornments had, however, failed to inspire confidence

in the minds of callous employers. As the razor sped through the foaming breakers on his face, and he saw his countenance returning to its pre-peace youthfulness, Jerry intoned: "And these are the cheeks which Petain kissed." As he removed the last hairs, he told himself: "Can't have any of the scornful guys who refused my services recognizing the pictures which will probably be published to-morrow."

Everything now being in order, Jerry stood for the last time before the cheap, distorting mirror, gave a touch to his harmonious tie, adjusted his immaculate cuffs, and apostrophized himself as follows: "Jerrold Emerson Middleton, I'll tell the world you've been a dam' good chum, a good fighter, and a cheerful duffer to live with. You haven't shown any J. Pierpont genius, but you've been daggone game, and I'm right down proud of the rarefied regions to which your brain has soared in the final hour of Pittsburg blackness. Now you are all dolled up, so step out amongst 'em. All I can say is, 'Cheerio!'"

Two hours later a well-dressed, well-bred, bored-looking, excessively pale, and almost emaciated young man stood on the kerb of that busy spot of London where Euston and Tottenham Court Roads meet.

He stared at the ceaseless tumult of traffic and took a last census of his emotions. If they could have been summed up in a concrete sentence, they might have run thus: "Of course it's taking chances chances of everything happening except the planned, but, after all, chance is the keynote of this venture, so here's hoping, and here goes!"

With a brief valedictory to common sense and his past, he walked out as a bather into a raging surf—straight into the traffic and the future.

Half a minute later a policeman's eye became attracted to a man standing transfixed in the maelstrom of Euston Road. The man took off his hat, ran his fingers through his short hair, and stared with drawn brows at an oncoming car. The car made a sharp detour, throwing an approaching 23 bus out of its accustomed route, and forcing it in turn to make a bee-line for the transfixed figure. The driver honked forth curses, and yanked on the brake, drawing up a short yard from the obstacle of traffic. Lurid language fell on apparently deaf ears. The object of invectives merely stared before him blankly as he slowly passed a hand over his forehead.

A motor cycle, making the turn into Tottenham Court Road, almost grazed the man's legs as it thundered by deafeningly, yet the most careful observer would not have detected the controlled wincing of the figure just missed.

Manœuvring himself between the congestion of traffic, the policeman lifted the hand of power and approached the cause of trouble. At sight of the Bobby the first glimmer of intelligence came to the face of the hitherto immobile figure. Springing across an open space, he seized the guardian of the law and cried:

"Man! In God's name find me—find me, I tell you." Clutching the blue sleeve, he looked excitedly into the eyes of the calm policeman and asked, "How did I get here?"

The Bobby gazed at him with an enormous British patience and remained silent.

"Don't you understand?" implored the speaker. "I'm lost—can't remember—can't—by George! . . ." He suddenly staggered, and a very curious blue pallor spread over his face. He would have fallen but for the quick support of a uniformed arm.

A whistle sounded. A second Bobby came hurrying. "What's up?" he asked. "Suicide or a drunk?" "Neither," said the supporter of Jerry Middleton. "Case for ambulance. Hunger, I think, and loss of memory."

CHATPER II

THE following morning Miss Felicity Trevider sat softly munching her breakfast toast while waiting for the maid to bring mustard for the bacon. Her eyes strayed through the mullioned windows, across a clearing in the Tolvean park above the wind-clipped even tops of distant trees, to the pale silver grey of the sea.

It was the same view Miss Trevider had gazed out upon, in all aspects of weather—grey mists, tempests, sodden rains, and sparkling sunshine—as far back as she could remember, and her memory could span the mornings of more than half a century.

The view was, to her, Cornwall, and the word Cornwall was probably engraved on both the auricles and ventricles of her heart. So intensely Cornish was Miss Trevider, she shared the fisher-folk's aloof attitude toward the inhabitants of all other English counties, regarded the denizens of Devon, the habitants of Hants, as "belonging" to England. Cornwall was still the Duchy, not England, to Miss Trevider.

She was gazing serenely at the gentle landscape framed by the old grey stone edges of the windows when the maid returned, bringing the mustard and the morning paper.

Miss Felicity was a sociable and affectionate soul by nature, and she was lonely. She longed to open the paper for companionship, but self-control and habit forbade it. She ate when she ate and read when she read. Even the best regulated souls, however, know the secret joy of compromise, so she felt it no infringement on the conventions of her customs to lay the paper in such a manner that the back page was visible to a roving eye. The back page with the pictorial section.

Miss Felicity's eye roved. The wandering, desultory gaze suddenly became riveted, then electrified with interest. She stared fixedly, with dilated eyes, upon the reproduction of a photograph of a clean-shaven, lean-cheeked, frank-eyed, well-featured young man. Quickly her eyes transferred themselves to the caption beneath. It ran:

"Who is he? He was found in Euston Road yesterday afternoon suffering from loss of memory. The police wish to establish his identity."

The little spinster, in her excitement, broke the habit of a lifetime. Forgetting her breakfast, she tremblingly opened the paper, her eyes scanning the inner sheets in search of further details of the man of mystery. After much gleaning she detected, in an obscure corner of the journal, the following item:

"Man With Lost Memory.—There is now at the Tottenham Court Road Police Station a young man of about twenty-seven years of age, suffering from malnutrition and loss of memory. He is six feet two inches in height, of fair, pale complexion, brown hair, and brown eyes. When found he was wearing a gray tweed suit, a dove-coloured soft felt hat, black shoes, and a blue shirt of good quality, but devoid of a maker's mark. There were no personal or identifying articles found upon him, and only twopence in change, which, in view of his well-dressed appearance, suggests, according to the theory of the police, that he may have been the victim of robbery and possibly of violence."

Miss Felicity, her toast and marmalade unfinished, rose and pulled the old-fashioned silk bell cord.

The young maid reappeared.

"Alice," said her mistress in the quavering tones of unwonted excitement, "ask Paynter to come to me at once."

The servant retired, imbued with a contagion of excitement over she knew not what. She had never before heard her little mistress speak with such lack of deliberation.

Paynter, the old housekeeper, bustled in, expectancy of the unusual writ large on her ruddy countenance. She was silently confronted by the picture entitled "Who Is He?" She stared, speechless.

"Paynter," said Miss Felicity, with unaccustomed breathlessness, "does that remind you of any one?"

Paynter, who had had too busy and humble a youth to learn reading and writing, could make neither head nor tail of the words printed below the picture, so she confined her concentration entirely upon the face itself.

"It certainly do, ma'm," she ventured at last, "an' beggin' your pardon for mentionin' it, but it looks to me as if it belonged to be a picture of the young master, ma'm."

"Oh, Paynter!" gasped Miss Felicity. "Do you really think so? Look again. Aren't the ears too small—isn't the face rather too thin—the eyes a trifle farther apart?"

"There may be points," hesitated the old house-keeper. "I can't say exactly. It's six years since I've seen 'e, you know, ma'm, but it fair give me a turn for the moment when I see it, it be so like 'e that last day when——"

"That will do, Paynter," interrupted her mistress, with dignity. She stared before her with unfocused vision for some moments, then turned towards her servant with a soft helplessness.

"Paynter, I'm sorely perplexed. I don't know what

to do. Look again," she pleaded. "Look at it upside down and tell me your honest opinion."

The old servant took the paper and reversed it. "It do be lookin' lovely this way, ma'm," she declared. "As pretty a picture of Mr. Monty as you've a mind to see—older, but 'e to the life."

"Paynter," said Miss Felicity solemnly, "I'm con-

vinced. I'm going on a journey."

"Never, ma'm!" cried Paynter. "Lord, Miss Felicity, 'ee haven't been out of Cornwall since—since—"

"Tell Sam to go down to the village and find out from the postmistress at what time I can catch the Cornish Riviera at St. Erth. I'm going to London, Paynter." These last words were spoken with the impressiveness with which one might announce, "I'm going to die."

"Don't stare," commanded the little lady; "do as I tell you, and hurry. And—one moment, Paynter—not a word to the other servants of what I have shown

you."

The old housekeeper drew herself up proudly.

"That's understood, ma'm. It's just between we. But, Miss Felicity"—Paynter's tone became curiously dictatorial—"if you be goin' to London, us be going together. Haven't I took care of 'ee all yer life? Yes'm, I be goin', and that's settled. I'd rather be stirrin' than settin'. I couldn't set here and think on 'ee adrift in London. No, ma'm, it ain't no use talking. I be goin', too." Paynter, having delivered herself of her decision, sailed from the room with the majesty of a barque.

Miss Felicity took up the paper from the table and gazed tenderly at the face of our friend, Jerry Middle-

ton, as she murmured brokenly:

"My poor dear Monty!"

CHAPTER III

AFTER his demobilization from the Légion Etrangère Jerry Middleton had made his way across the Channel, drawn to England by the call of blood, for, though a citizen of America by birth, a soldier of France by oath of allegiance, Jerry felt himself English—English by right of an English father.

He had chosen an unfortunate time to seek his fortune in the land of his paternal ancestors, for England was then struggling with her seemingly unsolvable problem of how to find sufficient employment for her own demobilized officers and men. Stories of houseless and jobless heroes filled the daily journals.

When, after months of bitter failure and ever-increasing hardships and ever-decreasing funds, Jerry had finally faced actual foodlessness, he spent a day soberly marshalling facts against fancy, the realities of the situation against visions of hope, and had asked himself squarely, "What's to be done?" Six months earlier he would have answered that question by the succinct reply, "Go to work." He had, however, been forced to the consciousness that the most sincere desire in the world to work would not and could not magically produce the opportunity. It was in the middle of the night—when fantastic thoughts are abroad in the ether—that the fantastic solution of his difficulty came to him. At first he laughed aloud at the brazen American gall of the

thing, as he termed it, and then its very cheekiness began to lend the idea an allure.

"After all," he argued, "it's not actually criminal—not like sandbagging a millionaire or looting the poor-box. At its worst it would be only playing a part—carrying out a ruse for time." The object of the game would be temporarily to procure free food and lodging, until he got back his physical strength. Then he could go forth again to battle with existence.

"Anybody with an ounce of theatrical ability could get away with it," he declared to himself. "It needs only a little cleverness, plenty of 'bull,' constant alertness to avoid the pitfalls of reminiscence—and nerve, brass-headed nerve. Pretend lost memory!—why, the thing ought to be as simple as falling off the roof of a skyscraper!

"Of course," he had assured himself, "if it begins, at any hour, to wax serious, or assume disagreeable expression, all I've got to do is to suddenly and miraculously recover my temporarily lost and strayed memory and start all over again, the better for my physical and mental rest—to say nothing of the food obtained at the expense of the British public."

All these thoughts recurred to Jerry as he lay in the Tottenham Court Road Police Station the morning after his adventure on Euston Road. What the ultimate outcome of his histrionic performance would be was of course now in the hands of the gods.

On the whole, he had not had a dull time. The doctor who had inspected him the night before had been rather tiresome, ordering that the stomach of the unknown was, under no considerations, to be over-taxed—just when Jerry began to realize how ravenously hungry he was.

On the doctor's return that morning, accompanied by a confrère, he had been less tiresome, but more disturbing. The two medical wiseacres had put him through various silly stunts—made him place the tips of his fingers slowly together and then talked learnedly in words of three syllables. The only term intelligible to Jerry's ears had been the word "coordination." They had made him most uncomfortable by performances with an electric torch held close to his eyes, while they discussed the reflex action of the pupils. An examination of his skull and the discovery of a small scar, caused by a splinter of shell, called forth talk of "possible pressure." Jerry became genuinely alarmed when he heard doctor number one talk about removing him to a hospital and of keeping him under observation for some days before they began to experiment.

"Experiment!" exclaimed Jerry inwardly. "Not on your life. I'll not have anybody slicing open my precious skull sapping for a lost memory."

Throughout the medical examination Jerry had remained apparently indifferent, and to all questions gave such idiotically stupid replies as to make him ashamed of himself.

The physicians retired, murmuring: "Undoubted case of shell-shock."

Before afternoon Jerry found himself staggered by the evidence of the great number of missing men in London. Five people of various social rank had called to inspect him. But he was nobody's sought-for darling. At noon a woman had arrived and explained that she had expected to find a lost husband, aged fifty-two.

"Golly!" thought Jerry. "The photograph they took of me yesterday afternoon must have been a bear if this old party thought she might find in me her missing link."

The most diverting hour he had spent had been

with a little lost kiddie the matron had brought in to see him. When questioned, the little chap would only repeat over and over: "Went to walk in Wegent's Park wif Tommy. Tommy said he'd show me el'phunts—den he wunned away." This autobiographical effort was invariably concluded by the chorus-dirge of: "I want my mummy!"

In his attempt to be interesting and diverting for the benefit of the lost boy, Jerry almost came his first cropper—just catching himself in time as he was on the verge of a reminiscence beginning: "When I was a little boy . . ."

As the child was led out of the door Jerry heard a policeman in the corridor saying to the matron:

"Another claimant for the young toff what's hoff 'is crumpet."

Jerry had grown so accustomed to claimants by now, he felt but little thrill over the prospect of a newcomer. His indifference, however, was quickened to intense interest by the sudden apparition before him of a fluttery little creature of the most perfect early Victorian type. The old lady, tiptoeing nervously, came forward, followed by a heavy-footed, large, red-cheeked, jolly person adorned in a be-feathered black hat and a be-bugled black cape. At sight of Jerry the jolly person almost eclipsed her face by hasty dabs at her eyes with a large pocket-handkerchief.

With hesitating steps, and much evident trembling, the little old lady fluttered to Jerry's side, her whole heart glowing in her eyes. Involuntarily he held out a hand and found it clasped in two quivering ones as the dear little soul sank to her knees beside him, crying: "Oh Monty! Monty dear!"

"Good Lord!" thought Jerry. "I'll be blowed. Never in my wildest Wild West schemes had I ever thought of being adopted by any one, but how am I going to resist this bird-like angel? She'll get my goat. Damned if she won't. I can't resist her—I feel it—I know it."

"Don't cry. Please don't cry," was all he could think of to say aloud.

The tear-stained little wrinkled face with its big appealing innocent eyes was lifted as the quivering lips framed the words:

"Don't you remember me, Monty dear? Don't you remember your Aunt Felicity?"

"Aunt Felicity," thought Jerry ecstatically. "Oh,

joy of joys! what a pippin of a name."

"Only wish I did—wish to Heaven I could, but I really and honestly don't, you know. All out of luck. Can't keep anything in my bean for five minutes. Nobody home!"

American slang being as unintelligible to his audience as Sanscrit, the last sentence uttered by Jerry seemed to Miss Felicity and Paynter like the ravings of a lunatic.

"Bean! Home!" echoed Miss Felicity brokenly.

"Poor laddie!" sympathized the jolly fat person, who stood with folded hands behind the little kneeling figure.

"Can you remember how to read, dear?" asked the perfect example of early Victorian.

"Don't know really," said Jerry. "Nobody's thought to invite me to have a try."

The little creature rose to her feet, took a newspaper from her black silk reticule, opened it, and handed it to Jerry.

By mere chance the first thing that met his eye was:

"NEWMARKET SELECTIONS"

He read aloud:

"The first October meeting which convenes to-day promises some interesting racing. For the opening day my selections are:

1.30—Wildfire
2.00—Bonaventure. . . ."

He had got only so far when he felt an electric element in the air, and raised his eyes from the sheet to witness a lightning exchange of glances between "Aunt Felicity" and the ruddy person. He also noticed that the cheeks of his would-be aunt had grown perceptibly pale, and that the plump person was slowly nodding her head with a smug expression of "What did I tell you?"

The fluttery little lady then fluttered over to the matron (who had stood silently by, during the enactment of the foregoing scene) and said:

"I now feel certain it is he—there is no longer any doubt whatever in my mind as to the identity of the poor boy. He is without the shadow of a question my nephew, Norman Montagu Trevider."

"Norman Montagu Trevider!" gasped Jerry Middleton inwardly. "Great guns! what am I to do? It would be like murdering women and children to deceive this dear old thing, but can I prove I'm not her blossoming nectarine of a nephew without giving away the whole show? Well I swan! I have got myself into a sacred mess. Feel perfectly pieeyed."

He was in the midst of the greatest mental panic he had ever experienced when he felt two arms steal round his neck and a lavender-scented, soft, wrinkled cheek press against his own.

All his loneliness, his homelessness, his unloved-

ness, surged over him; all his hitherto unrealized yearning for companionship, home, love, crested his thoughts, as, curiously enough, a long-forgotten fragment of Byron came winging into his memory:

"The poorest, veriest wretch on earth Still finds some hospitable hearth. . . ."

He realized the "hospitable hearth" which these encircling arms epitomized, and his heart ached homesickly for the love embodied in the caressing cheek against his. He felt himself wavering, weakening. To the last cry of his conscience he said, "Shut up," and, lifting his own arms, placed them gently, reverently, around the tiny frail body of "Aunt Felicity."

"I knew she'd get me—I knew it. Here goes nothing!" thought Jerry, as with a delicious, irresponsible sensation of intoxication he declared to himself he had but capitulated to the inevitable—his conscience thereupon adroitly shifting all burden of responsibility upon the Atlas shoulders of Fate.

And who can say whether he was wrong or right in feeling himself but a pawn in the great hand of some unknown player? Mark Twain has said that the first impulse of the first atom decided what each of us should be doing at this particular moment. According to this theory, Jerry Middleton was but helplessly carrying out the design ordained by a whimsical first atom.

CHAPTER IV

It was the imposing individual whom Miss Trevider spoke of as "dear Sir Wilfred" who arranged all the formalities and manipulated the red-tape incident to the establishment of her claim of relationship to that American soldier of fortune known to himself and to us as Jerry Middleton.

It was also this same Sir Wilfred who had arrived at the conservative old-fashioned hotel—dear to the hearts of provincials—to announce to Miss Trevider that after much telegraphing and trouble he had at last succeeded in running Wiggs to earth. By what seemed to Miss Felicity a special grace of Providence, Wiggs had been found to be unemployed at the moment. He had expressed himself by wire as available, and delighted to enter again the service of his former young master.

"Wiggs was—as indeed we all were—devoted to Monty," Miss Felicity reminded Sir Wilfred, "and he may perhaps be of great help in stirring up memories of the past in the poor boy's clouded mind."

"And I've sent a wire to Celia," said Sir Wilfred, with a sonorous clearing of the throat. "She will share in your great relief and happiness, Miss Trevider, and will, I'm sure, want to be among the first to welcome the wanderer home."

"You have been most thoughtful about everything, dear Sir Wilfred," murmured Miss Felicity. "What I would ever have done without you, I don't know. This thing has indeed made me realize what a

poor, helpless creature a woman is, when faced with anything outside her own little realm of home. How could I have ever proved that I am his aunt without your wise assistance?"

Sir Wilfred protested, but preened himself with

masculine pride and sat a trifle more uprightly.

"And what of your interview with him—with Monty?" queried the little lady. "Did he give any evidences of recognition?"

"None whatever," said Sir Wilfred, with rather an air of relief, mentally avoiding a sharp memory of a none too pleasant half-hour spent with young Trevider six years earlier, just indeed before that young man had decamped for parts unknown.

"But you feel sure I am right—that there is no doubt of his identity?" asked Miss Felicity anxiously. "Certainly, my dear lady, certainly, no doubt whatever. Only the changes which six years would naturally produce—older, maturer, and, let us hope, steadier. I base great hopes on his return to Cornwall and all his old surroundings—great hopes. Rest and time will, I am sure, restore everything—everything to its old footing," he concluded, with significance.

When the refound Wiggs was eventually brought into the presence of Jerry Middleton (who had removed from the Tottenham Court Road Police Station to the hotel), that mystified individual, not having the remotest idea of Wiggs' status, had wrung his hand warmly and said he hoped he found himself well. Wiggs was quite overcome. He had remained only a brief time with Jerry, having many vital things to accomplish in the forty-eight hours before the day on which he was to accompany his master to Cornwall.

Jerry wondered who under the sun this newcomer could be, but on Wiggs producing a tape measure and silently making notes of the various dimensions of Jerry's figure, he decided that the reserved stranger must be an emissary of the police. He supposed these details of his person were to adorn the Rogues' Gallery.

When, on the morning of his departure for Cornwall with his new aunt, Jerry found Wiggs accompanying them to Paddington, he got the man aside while waiting for the Riviera and said:

"Say, look here, what the devil are you, anyway? Are you a detective or a sort of keeper—hired to

watch me and that sort of thing, you know?"

"Not in the least, sir," protested the amazed and wounded Wiggs. "I was formerly by way of being, so to speak, your batman—valeted you, sir, you know."

"Good Lord!" was Jerry's cryptic reply.

Jerry hadn't the foggiest notion of what a valet's duties might be, but he feared the worst. Visions of having to use personal violence to discourage Wiggs's efforts to comb one's hair and sponge one in the bath flitted before him. Melancholy settled like a pall, and not even the departure in a first-class carriage—the first Jerry had ever travelled in—or Miss Felicity's sweet efforts to make him comfortable with a pillow purchased especially for the occasion, could lift the gloom from a vista down valeted days and nights.

"I'll have to come to, just to avoid Wiggs," thought

Jerry.

Miss Felicity, noticing her supposed nephew's look of gloom, tried to divert him by drawing his attention to the marginal portions of London through which the train was now speeding. She kept wondering to herself if the sight of some familiar spot—the river at Maidenhead, for instance—might not rouse the dormant memory.

Jerry remained silent and preoccupied. He was just wondering gloomily if Wiggs would be wanting to chirop one's feet and use a powder-puff on one's back, when Mis Felicity's self-restraint broke bounds as they passed through Reading.

"Doesn't this make you feel at home, Monty dear?" she queried in her bird-like tone. "Don't you re-

member Huntley and Palmer's biscuits?"

"'Fraid not," sighed Jerry, who felt himself growing self-conscious as he looked up to find three sets of eyes fastened on him with individual and collective hopefulness. The expression of disappointment in Miss Felicity's eyes was so poignant, Jerry felt like a brute, and forthwith determined to pretend a recognition of something soon, just to please the tender-hearted little lady. So it came to pass, as the train sped through Newbury, Jerry sat up suddenly, and with a well-feigned sparkle of interest in his eyes and true histrionic effect of voice cried out, "I'll be blowed!"

"Did you speak, dear?" asked Miss Felicity.

"By golly!" panted Jerry. "It's queer, but——" He paused and stared out of the window. "It is queer," he continued; "but I somehow feel I've seen this place before."

A sharp cry of pain from Miss Felicity brought Jerry's eyes abruptly from their scrutiny of Newbury. To his utter bewilderment he beheld his new aunt dissolved in tears behind her wee handkercief, while on Paynter's round face was a look of grim disapproval.

Wiggs coughed nervously and warningly, and broke the tension of the moment by a suggestion that perhaps Mr. Trevider would like to retire to a smoking compartment for a cigarette.

Jerry's admiration of Wiggs at that moment knew no bounds. Without further urging he sped from the carriage with a glance at Wiggs which clearly signified "Follow me." "Well, I'll be darned," began Jerry as soon as they were out of earshot of Miss Felicity. "Now what the devil have I done?"

"Most unfortunate, sir—most unfortunate," sighed Wiggs. "Quite upset the mistress."

"What the deuce are you talking about?" snapped

Jerry.

"Most unfortunate your recognition having occurred just at that particular spot, sir. Stirred up most painful memories for your poor aunt, sir."

"And why the blazes can't I recognize Newbury if I want to? What's wrong with Newbury? Isn't it a perfectly good place for a sane man to remember?"

"Well, sir, you see-" hesitated Wiggs.

"Out with it—if it's a disreputable hole, there's no sense in keeping it from me."

"Well, sir, you see, that's where it happened."

"Where what happened?"

"Where you dropped the thousand that caused all the trouble. . . "

"I dropped a thousand! I had a thousand pounds to drop! Wiggs, you flatter me." Jerry gave a

wry smile.

"Yes, sir, you did; and, you see it gave Miss Trevider a bit of a turn when she found it out, and then there were scenes, and Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh had to speak to you—and—and——" Wiggs suddenly became abashed by his own unwonted lack of reserve, and lapsed into silence.

"Go on," commanded Jerry. "I guess I have a perfect right to hear the sob stuff of my own past, if

any one has. Go on, I tell you."

"Well, sir, you see you were a very high-spirited young man, and you—well, sir, you see you were very indignant and lost your temper, so to speak, and after high words with your aunt and Sir Wilfred, you walked out of the house. That, sir, is all—all until your

unexpected return in this—begging your pardon—this sad state of forgetfulness."

"Look here, Wiggs," said Jerry. "Do a little forgetting yourself. Forget that you are my servant and talk to me as man to man. Was I a goddam stinker?"

"Heaven forbid, sir!" defended Wiggs loyally. "A gay young blood, sir, certainly, and over-fond of the horses and cards, but a true Trevider and all that was generous and sporting. That was what made our loss of you so—so—well, sir, so——" Wiggs was still struggling to find a suitably strong yet respectfully restrained term, when Jerry broke in abruptly with, "Whose thousand was it I lost?"

"Why, your aunt's, sir, to be sure. That is, you had nothing beyond the allowance she made you."

"Well, I'll be——" Jerry gave a low whistle. "Do you mean to say that after *that*, the dear lady is so overjoyed at having me back?"

"It's a way the ladies have, sir," ejaculated Wiggs, with a sigh of philosophic resignation.

Silence reigned for a minute, then Wiggs, suddenly remembering something, felt tentatively in a hip pocket.

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Monty, but I had thought that perhaps you might be feeling the need of a little refreshment on the journey, so I took the liberty of having this flask filled."

Jerry gazed at Wiggs with positive admiration. After all, if a valet could forestall all one's needs and desires like this—well, the future didn't look so black after all.

Wiggs also produced from an overcoat pocket a small bottle of soda and a collapsible drinking-cup.

Jerry lifted his drink with the silent toast of: "Aunt Felicity, God bless her!"

When he had finished he said aloud: "Help your-

self, Wiggs."

"Oh! thanks, sir," said Wiggs, smiling, adding: "If you'll pardon my saying so, I'm glad to see you haven't changed much."

Arrived eventually at Trewarthenith (pronounced Trewenith), Jerry got the impression that it must be the modest station of some vast metropolis, so great was the crowd there assembled. The romantic news of the return of the long-lost young master of "Tolvean" had, of course, gone abroad, and all the tenantry of both the Trevider and the Boughten-Leigh estates, as well as villagers and neighbouring farmers, had flocked to meet the train.

On all sides the returning hero was being discussed in the Cornish fashion. "Poor laddie! They say 'e's hurted 'is head." . . . "Yes, 'is wits be gone abroad." . . . "E must 'ave been bra'ly scowed by a blow." . . . "Yes, a scat on the skull, 'ee may be sure. . . "

Many had seen the photograph entitled, "Who is he?" and, of course, each individual now claimed to have realized the true identity of the original the moment they had set eyes on the picture. Trewarthenith had not experienced such an excitement for decades. Only the diplomatic protests of Celia Boughton-Leigh had restrained the villagers from welcoming the young master with the town band.

Jerry felt horribly shy as he stepped from the train and realized himself the target of stares from

all eyes.

"Give them a greeting, dear," whispered Miss Felicity. "They will be expecting it." Jerry turned, lifted his hat generally, bowed allembracingly, and smiled perfunctorily, feeling for the first time in his life as if he were royalty, or a potentate of sorts.

After a warm welcome from the old coachman he sat himself beside the flushed and excited Miss Felicity and drove off amid a volley of cheers from the nolonger-to-be-restrained throng.

Aunt Felicity hoped at every moment that the sight of some old familiar spot would reawaken her nephew's dormant faculties. As the carriage reached the summit of the first hill she cried: "Look, dear, don't you remember?—there's Godrevy lighthouse in the distance, and look over this side—there's your old favourite, Trencrom."

Jerry stared at the picturesque line of the hill, which he now beheld for the first time; the terrible falsity of his position suddenly dawned upon him. He turned his eyes miserably towards the blue line of sea and the rock on which stood Godrevy, then his eyes fell on those of the little old lady beside him, and a flush surcharged his cheeks as he applied to himself the ugly word "impostor."

Miss Felicity attributed the misery of his eyes and the flush to the chaos she had produced in the poor clouded brain by her premature attempts to force recollection, and mentally admonished herself, determining to point out no further landmarks.

Jerry on his side admonished his conscience to "shut up," adding inwardly: "If I begin to take myself too seriously and let it get in on me, I'll spoil everything. I've got to play the game, now I've taken the plunge." He diverted himself by looking about on the really lovely moorland country, tinted like an old Persian rug with red and yellow bracken and splotches of purple heather.

"I'll say it's fine, Aunt Felicity," he declared. "Bully country. I'm as happy as a three-year-old."

Miss Felicity pressed his hand tenderly.

There was a sound of hoofs on the road behind them and a young woman dashed up, reining in beside the carriage.

"Couldn't resist overtaking you, Miss Felicity," she cried, and reaching down a hand to Jerry, said: "Welcome home, Monty. Awfully jolly to see you again."

Jerry tried to look intelligent as he wondered who under heaven this cheery creature was.

Miss Felicity saved the moment by saying: "We are so glad to see you, Celia dear. Your father has been most kind to Monty and me in town. I don't know what I would have done without him. I'm sure it would add to the pleasure of Monty's first night at home if you could come over to dinner with us this evening."

Thanks to Miss Felicity, Jerry was now able to put

two and two together, and he quickly urged:

"Yes, do by all means," and added, "I'll tell the world Sir Wilfred was a corker!" Celia looked a little surprised, but with a "See you later" and a gay wave of the hand she reversed her horse and the clatter of hoofs receded in the distance.

"Perfect bear, isn't she?" ejaculated Jerry.

"Bear?" murmured Miss Felicity in distressed tones. "I thought you liked Celia, dear. You used to admire her very much—very."

"I still do," said Jerry. 'I mean she gets my goat."

"Bear—goat?" Miss Felicity sighed. "Poor boy!" She patted his hand tenderly, as one does the hand of the ill, and hoped he'd not begin to rave before they got home and begin to talk about snakes.

Jerry meanwhile wondered just how much young

Trevider had admired Celia and what their relations had been. He must interrogate Wiggs. While he was still pondering the subject the carriage turned into a dignified old gateway, passed an ivy-covered, picturesque lodge and proceeded slowly up a winding drive through wonderful, century-old trees whose roots were hidden by a thick growth of rhododendron. The slated roof and gables of a large rambling old grey house showed in the distance through the trees.

"It all seems like a dream!" Jerry involuntarily

exclaimed.

Aunt Felicity trembled with joy. "Oh, does it, dear? I'm so glad—so glad. It means that everything will soon seem real, and you'll get rid of all the goats and bears. Here we are. Home!"

"Home!" repeated Jerry mechanically, as he stared at the charming old-world house confronting them. He in turn found himself trembling—trembling with excitement and a horrid realization of the incredible impudence of his presence there. Here was he, an American stranger, about to enter this wonderful old English home of tradition and proud lineage, probably as its future heir, he who a week earlier had sat in the shabby rear-room of a London lodging-house, staring at the soiled wallpaper and wondering where he would get his next meal. . . .

"Well," thought Jerry, "I can't write, but, by golly,

I'm sure living fiction all right!"

He was brought back to the moment by the sweet voice of Miss Felicity saying, as she led him through the hall door, held open by a low-bowing, radiant-faced old man-servant, "Welcome home, welcome back, my dear, dear boy!"

She drew him into the drawing-room. Putting her arms around his neck, she tiptoed and kissed him, as tears of joy ran down her cheeks.

Jerry gathered the little lady in his arms and held her close to him with a sudden birth of genuine affection, and an agony of conscience. "God help me, Aunt Felicity!" he murmured brokenly. "I'll make all this up to you somehow—darned if I don't!"

CHAPTER V

THE incredibility of life must have impressed any one who has lived beyond the age of thirty, an incredibility which makes literary presentations, for those who have *lived* Life, mere pallid expurgated renditions of reality.

What author could have imagined the pathos, horror, and heroism coincident with the sinking of the *Titanic?* In all literature there is nothing which grips the throat and heart as does the memory of that ship's band. The human race must be for ever haunted by the tones of "Nearer, my God, to Thee," played as the water crept ever upward, upward—over knees, over waistline, until it reached at last the hearts of those supernal musicians.

What author could have surmised the horrors, splendours, sacrifices, revealed by the recent World War? The pen of writers became for ever dwarfed by deeds which were done hour after hour in France—deeds too big and beautiful for adequate depiction by any human genius.

The setting of the everyday sun, the ineffable expression of love in the eyes of a woman, the mystery of moonlight on snow. . . . These natural, familiar miracles bring to every artist a tragic realization of the inadequateness, the paucity, of paint, music, and words.

The melodramatic surprises of life, its startling coincidences, its rapturous joys, its unendurable sorrows, its irremediable losses, are all incredible—too incredible to be good art.

The incredibility of life became the preoccupation of Jerry Middleton from the moment he met Miss Felicity Trevider. The ineradicableness of any act of life also impressed itself upon his consciousness. When he had stepped out from the kerb on Euston Road he had really walked out upon the Highway of Chance. That first step had simultaneously set in motion those relentless natural laws which bind sequences to human action with an unbreakable chain.

Albert Bigelow Paine once said, "No one can write a biography without becoming a fatalist."

As Jerry Middleton reviewed his autobiography, he felt there was nothing to fit it but fatalism.

Fate, the prestidigitator, had juggled him deftly from the small, unpainted little wooden dwelling in South Carolina to the lichen-covered walls of this majestic old Cornish manor house. L'escamoteur had brought him via France and the horrors of war, London and the hardships of peace. Jerry had arrogantly thought he had gone to France through his own furious impulse; he had thought he had walked out into Euston Road through his own inspirational recklessness.

"Was it volitional impulse at all?" he now asked. Or rather was he but a helpless slave, driven, driven, driven, by the whiplash of some huge, conscienceless, calculating overseer?

Twenty-five years earlier Jerry Middleton had been born in the little South Carolinian village of Ninety-Six, a village which could have been termed insignificant had it not become historically notable as the home of Preston S. Brooks, the chastiser of Sumner.

Jerry had come into the world three months after his father had departed from it. His father had been a mediocre, unsuccessful lawyer. He was a reticent man, who remained a mystery even to his wife, which shows that he must, after all, have had a cleverness of sorts. From rare reminiscences she learned he had been born of English parents, that he had been a wanderer in many lands, that he had known the far British colonies, and that there were bitter memories, best forgotten, associated with all these places.

Undoubtedly well born and primarily accustomed to the ease and grace of life, he was irritated and infuriated by the austerities coincident with failure and poverty. One could not begrudge him the luxurious restfulness of death.

His wife was left almost penniless. She, however, promptly developed remarkable resourcefulness, turning an artistic taste and a clever needle to practical ends. By "taking in sewing"—that dernier ressort of the destitute Southern gentlewoman—she had managed to support her child and herself, far more adequately, in fact, than her husband could have, by quoting Blackstone.

Jerry, a happy-go-lucky boy, had accepted his mother's support as a matter of course. The accustomed is seldom arresting. His earliest memory had been that of a bent-shouldered mother plying a needle which rose and fell with rhythmic regularity. It was when he was sixteen and about to enter the State University, that he saw for the first time—saw the tragedy, the laboriousness, the mute self-sacrifice symbolized by that tide-like needle.

That needle was to put him through college. He'd be damned if it should! He wasn't going to college. He was going to work.

For four and a quarter subsequent years he had occupied a poorly paid position in the town bank. Showing no particular ability, he received no advancement. Then his mother died—died as unaffectedly as she had lived. Before his heart had recovered

from that surprise and sorrow, his soul received its first great shock—a shock disassociated from his own personal affairs—the shock of that most monstrous of crimes, the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was the turning-point of Jerry Middleton's life. It inaugurated thought, impersonal thought. Self was forgotten in the vaster thought of humanity. The more he thought, the more he passionately yearned to hear a nation's righteous cry demanding punishment, vengeance. Aghast at his country's supine attitude, Jerry stood at his desk day after day, the ears of his entire being listening tensely for the call to arms. After a month during which the world had heard only the click of a typewriter in Washington, Jerry resigned his job, turned everything available into cash, got to New York, and sailed for France.

The Légion Etrangère welcomed him, as it did all enraged, inspired, adventurous dare-devils from the four corners of an indignant world. Jerry fought for God and The Right under the French flag and discovered cosmopolite patriotism.

Of the remainder of our hero's story up to his arrival in Cornwall, we are sufficiently conversant for the purposes of this history.

The outcome of his "Solution" had left him breathless. Jerry wondered what would have happened had Miss Felicity not mistaken him for her lost nephew. Would he have been shifted to the workhouse, asylum, or gaol?

From the first moment he had entered "Tolvean" he felt that a prolonged deception of Miss Felicity would be unendurable to him. Left alone in his bedroom, his conscience reached the acute stage of uncomfortableness where he felt relief could be attained only by an immediate confession of everything.

So obliterating were the pangs of conscience he failed to hear the soft pedalled entrance of Wiggs, and gave a nervous start as Wiggs spoke his name and suggested a bath and a rest for the hour which would elapse before it would be time to dress for dinner. Wiggs held a Chinese blue crêpe dressing-gown which he had procured from Heaven only knew where.

As Jerry disrobed, a sudden sense of well-being surcharged him. The luxurious surroundings, the cheery fire, the noiseless service of Wiggs, even the blue dressing-gown, all acted as emollients on a raw conscience. A soothing procrastination invaded his thoughts; his conscience became dormant. The bath finished, Jerry flung himself on the couch before the fire as he watched Wiggs's activities about the room with the naïve interest elicited by the unusual.

"Did you say 'dress' a while ago, Wiggs? How can I rig up for dinner when I haven't a thing to doll up in?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," replied Wiggs, with a deeply injured air, "but you surely could depend upon me not to overlook so important a matter as evening clothes. I am now preparing irons to give them a pressing, as I found them somewhat wrinkled on taking them out of the travelling-case."

"But," gasped Jerry in stupefaction, "where in the blue blazes did you find any duds for me?"

"Don't you recall, sir, that I made a few measurements the first day I came to the hotel?"

"Oh yes, so I do. But I confess I thought at the time you were an emissary of the police, and were merely taking notes of my special points of beauty for the edification of Scotland Yard."

"Jocose as ever, Mr. Monty!" Wiggs commented, with the condescending smile with which one might encourage a child.

"But how did you magic the adornments into being?"

"A visit to your old London tailor, sir—a comparison with former measurements, and the alterations made necessary by the natural changes brought about by the past six years. I requested especial haste in getting the several suits ready."

"Suits!" exclaimed Jerry, appalled by Wiggs's efficiency.

"Yes, sir. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, I felt justified in taking the liberty of ordering what I considered necessary for your immediate needs, modelling my opinions on what I could recall of your former tastes. I have in hand only a morning-suit, riding things, and evening wear. As soon as you feel sufficiently recovered, sir, to trouble yourself about such matters, we will go seriously into the matter of your wardrobe."

"O Lord!" thought Jerry, "this is being valeted!" Aloud he said:

"Wiggs, accept my heartfelt thanks for all your thoughtfulness." He paused, and then added dramatically: "I will reward you by an immediate promotion."

"Yes, sir," replied Wiggs imperturbably.

Jerry smiled. "You are forthwith appointed to the position of Chief of the Intelligence Bureau."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes. You are to inform me upon all points concerning myself—past, present, and future. You will enter upon your new duties at once. Do you realize, Wiggs, I don't even know my own nationality. I may be a Bolshevik, a Beluchistanee, or a Bolivian for all I know."

"Heaven forbid, sir! You are an American."

"As bad as that! Well, I suppose it can't be helped. But how do I come to be American and there is my aunt, Cornish to the core?" "Your father, sir, Miss Trevider's younger brother, went to the States early in life—went to a place called Virginia, and there married a Southern lady. I regret to say, sir, you are an orphan. Though the son of an English father, you are legally, through no fault of your own, an American subject."

"Citizen, Wiggs, citizen!"

"Well, sir, citizen."

"Go on," urged Jerry.

"Your father, as I said, having died, you were, at Miss Trevider's request, sent by your maternal grandmother to England for your education. You see, sir, you would be the natural heir to the estate if——" Wiggs came to an abrupt halt.

"Well if-what?" asked Jerry.

"That, sir, is a subject which—well, sir, to put it briefly, I do not feel that I, as a servant, have a right to discuss intimate matters concerning the family affairs. I would be obliged if you would put any questions regarding such subjects to your aunt."

"Quite right. I understand," said Jerry. The servant's hesitation and mysterious air convinced Jerry that here was a family skeleton. "You were talking about my education."

"So I was, sir. You were sent to Wellington—very good school, Wellington. From there you went to Oxford. You had not yet finished college, sir, when—when it happened, that is, when the end came, so to speak, unexpectedly."

"Thank you, Wiggs. I see," said Jerry. "That is about as much intelligence as I can stand from your department for the moment. You see my brain is still labelled 'Empty. Undergoing repairs.'"

Wiggs was about to retire when Jerry recalled him. "One moment, Wiggs. A little more information re-

quired. Miss Boughton-Leigh. . . . Just what was my status there?"

"It would be difficult to say exactly, sir," he temporized. "I think, however, I may be so bold as to say it was supposed to be the hope of both Miss Trevider and Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh that you, as the probable heir of Tolvean, and Miss Boughton-Leigh, only daughter and child of Sir Wilfred, and heiress of the adjoining estate, would—well, to put it frankly, sir, marry."

"Indeed! And where had things got to when I flew the coop?"

"That, sir, I regret to say, I am unable to give you exact information upon. But, judging from appearances, I would have thought things were progressing encouragingly."

"Here endeth the first lesson," said Jerry. "You can vamoose now, Wiggs."

"How shall I do it, sir?" asked the puzzled but willing Wiggs.

"If you want to be entertaining you might try doing it on all-fours, but for comfort it would be best perhaps to conform to habit and retire on your two feet."

"Oh, sir!" said Wiggs, a light dawning upon him.

"Say, Wiggs, did you ever have a hang-over?" Jerry called by way of postscript.

"Can't say that I have, sir. I know little about hangings—never having attended one, sir."

"Then there's no use appealing to you for sympathy," sighed Jerry. "I suppose you wouldn't understand if I told you that all the information you've flooded me with has left me feeling perfectly pifficated."

"Afraid not, sir," replied Wiggs, with a correct note of regret. Within, he inelegantly opined. "Balmy! Blooming case of shell-shock and no ruddy error!"

CHAPTER VI

Jerry entered the drawing-room. A photograph in a silver frame on a table was the first object which met his eye. It was a photograph of Montagu Trevider. That fact Jerry realized at first glance. He studied the face with startled interest. The photograph could easily have passed for an earlier one of himself. The likeness was indeed uncanny, an evidence of one of those freaks of nature by which amazingly similar human beings are born of different parents.

As he stood spellbound before this photographic proof of his startling resemblance to Monty Trevider, Jerry understood for the first time the very natural mistake made by Miss Felicity and others. Suddenly his attention was distracted by the sound of voices in the hall. This is what he heard:

"Have you sent word to Polly?" in a voice which he recognized to be that of Celia Boughton-Leigh.

"Yes, I have cabled," replied Miss Trevider. "But not a word of her is to be mentioned to Monty. The cable was your father's suggestion. Sir Wilfred believes if Monty is unexpectedly confronted with Polly, something will snap in his brain—don't you see? I mean that the surprise may in a moment restore his memory. Alienists and nerve specialists—so your father tells me—are agreed that sudden shock or happy surprise are the most effective remedies in such cases."

"I see," said Celia. "But how can you keep him from hearing Polly's name? Some one is certain to mention her. Even the servants might naturally do so."

"As for the servants, I can depend on Paynter. She will give instructions in the servants' hall. And you, Celia, I thought you could arrange it where our friends are concerned. You could just let it be understood in the countryside that we don't want to spoil the surprise of Polly's return, or—well, anything that may occur to you."

Jerry felt like a cur. It was most uncomfortable to play the part of involuntary eavesdropper. Replacing the photograph on the table, he tiptoed to the extreme end of the large drawing-room and flopped into an armchair, assuming an expression of extreme blankness and stupidity. A moment later Miss Felicity and her guest entered. Jerry rose with a well-feigned start. The first look of apprehension in Miss Felicity's eyes gave place to one of relief.

Celia Boughton-Leigh approached, and instead of shaking hands, did what a man would have termed slapped him on the shoulder, as she said heartily, "Well, old thing! How are you?"

Jerry was rather taken aback by this greeting, but the girl's methods and manners were at least effectual in the breaking down of barriers. And Jerry had actually been fearing he might be kissed!

"Topping," he replied, priding himself on having achieved so un-American an adjective.

"How about a spin to-morrow morning in old Charon?" she asked. "You see, he is still going strong in spite of tuberculosis of the respirator, and spavin in the gears. He can do everything but take hedges—has even nobly tried to. Will you come?"

"Sure!" Jerry replied blithely.

"Then I'll jazz round for you about ten and we'll get

back—well, when we do. Doesn't that sound like old times, Miss Felicity?"

"It certainly does," smiled Miss Felicity, as the butler entered to announce dinner.

Jerry was assigned the seat at the head of the table facing Miss Trevider. He felt the psychological significance of the position, and a queer sense of being the head of the family came over him.

The early part of the meal was difficult and inter-

spersed with awkward conversational pauses.

Celia suddenly broke a silence by exclaiming: "It's all rot keeping up this unnatural strain. Fifty times I've been on the verge of saying, 'Don't you remember so and so, Monty?' One simply can't go on not referring to the past. I'm going to run on low gear from this time forth and say anything that comes into my head. I'm sure you're not so silly as to be sensitive about the thing, Monty. I rather suspect you are absurdly proud of your unique malady."

"Sure," laughed Jerry, with relief. "I can't see why we should feel as if we're at a funeral and treat my departed memory as the late lamented. So fire away and say any old thing you like. If I don't remember I'll say so."

From that time the conversation rippled on unintellectually up to the after-dinner cigarettes which Celia and Jerry enjoyed together alone in the library.

"Isn't it just too thrilling," said she, "not knowing what you've been doing, or what crimes you have committed during all these mysterious years?"

"I suppose it is," he confessed. "Now that I come to think about it, I seem to have rather nasty twinges of conscience about, about—well, something, every once in a while."

"How lovely!" gushed Celia. "Why, you may have robbed banks, committed murder, or been a spy. . . .

And I don't suppose they could really hold you responsible for any of your crimes now. Oh, for a blow on the head! Then I could do all the dreadful things I'm constantly longing to. People would simply say, 'Poor Celia, she's been a bit queer ever since that awful accident!'"

"Let's hope for the best to-morrow. Perhaps Charon will take a header," suggested Jerry.

"And bump your memory into place as it dislocates mine. I wonder if you fought," she said abruptly. "I'd hate you if you'd been a slacker or a conchy. Have you got any scars?"

"I believe the medical guys at the police station did discover some defacement of my belfry."

"Oh! let's see," cried Celia exuberantly. She seized his head and unceremoniously examined the scalp. "How thrilling! Here it is. Of course it is a shell splinter wound. I'm so glad. Oh, Monty!" she added, with disconcerting intensity as she smoothed his locks almost caressingly, "it's so good to have you back. You don't know how I missed you after you went away. Of course there was the war and France—I drove an ambulance, you know—but the after-war stupidity nearly killed me. The past summer I've been bored to tears with only Mr. Coolie for tea and tennis. You do still like me, don't you?"

"Like you!" echoed Jerry in a tone implying the meagreness of the words. He inwardly prayed matters were not going to take a sentimental turn.

At that moment Miss Felicity joined them, and Jerry heaved a sigh which was not interpreted as one of relief by Celia.

Later on, as he walked home with her, taking the short-cut through the park and meadows, he carefully engineered the conversation away from sentimental channels by displaying a desire to hear details of Celia's

activities in France. She was not averse to telling them.

While undoubtedly avoiding all intention of swanking, she nevertheless gave the impression of heroic affairs conducted with great efficiency.

Jerry was deeply impressed, but not warmed.

On his return he made a detour into the forest of the Tolvean park. It was magically beautiful with its elfin moonlit mystery. He stood still. Peace seemed to enter his troubled soul. It was more than the peace of a place of solitude, it was the immemorial thing that is England. A curious realization came to Jerry of that essence of stability, pride of race, fixed and noble ideals, and sense of responsibility which have made the English estates what they are.

All this wonderful place, all its peace, its permanence, its traditions, might be his for a lifetime, if the real heir did not return. It required only a continuance of pretence. It was a temptation, hang it all!

In the pulsating silence he heard overhead the wee voice of a bird, complaining, as one disturbed in its sleep. A slight rustle in the leaves of the underbrush preceded the dart of a startled hare.

"Invader!" the bird seemed to say. "Invader!" repeated the scuttling hare. Even the night wind became accusative.

An indescribable depression descended upon Jerry's spirit. He found himself wondering where the real Montagu Trevider might be at this particular moment. Little did that wanderer dream of the invader who had taken his place as probable heir to all these fair acres—heir, too, if he chose, to the girl young Trevider had loved.

Jerry left the wood and again found the meadow path.

He tried to sum up the impression made upon him by

Celia. A jolly enough girl, a good sort, companionable, but . . . Jerry had to confess in his heart to a different ideal, a liking for the more old-fashioned type—the clinging vine, which by its very helplessness made a man feel peculiarly virile and protecting. Celia, former motor-ambulance driver in France, needed no man's protection.

Of course when one has never been in love it is futile to formulate theories. Life had a way of upsetting theories anyhow. Look at the astonishing people our friends married—often the very opposite of their proclaimed ideals.

As Jerry neared the door of "Tolvean" there came back to his memory the conversation which had taken place in the hall before dinner—the conversation he had unwillingly heard. All other thoughts were quickly obliterated by the overwhelming wonder: "Who in the deuce is Polly?"

Polly! He liked the name. It had a helpless, cuddly, lovable sound. He hoped Polly had not been to France. He hoped she had not become accustomed to horrible sights. He hoped she had never had to lift crumpled, gory wrecks of humanity. He hoped she had never sped over those hideous muddy French roads at night. "Golly!" thought Jerry, with frank disgust, "what queer guys men are. We admire heroism in women in the abstract; we glory in the magnificent deeds of the women who aren't ours, but when it comes to rockbottom truth we are just selfish hogs even when it comes to glory—want to do all the big star stunts ourselves and keep our own women soft and helpless—dazzle them by great masculine qualities which they must never hope to possess."

As he opened the door a mouse sped across the hall. Jerry smiled crookedly as he thought: "I hope to the Lord, Polly'll be scared to death of mice!"

CHAPTER VII

A LIGHTED candle awaited him on the hall table. In its dim light the unfamiliar surroundings took on a sentient ghostliness.

Jerry glanced nervously around and upward. His eyes were met by another pair of eyes smiling down on him with a singularly engaging expression—an expression which seemed to almost voice a welcoming greeting. He was gazing at the portrait of a boy in Eton suit. If it had not possessed the mellowness of tone, which time alone can give a painting, it might have been a portrait of Montagu Trevider at the age of, say, fifteen.

It recalled to Jerry's recollection a photograph of himself taken just before he had gone to work in the bank. There were the same laughing hazel eyes, the same high-bridged sensitive nose, the same quizzical tilt of the left eyebrow, the same dip of the hair in the centre of forehead.

"Well," commented Jerry to himself, "when Nature planned me out, she didn't show much originality. Used some old model she'd grown dotty on and got the habit of. Just turned us out by the peck. Rummy stunt, all the same, and sort of takes the starch out of a fellow's pride—makes him feel about as individual as a green pea."

Flanking the walls on both sides were other portraits—some almost obliterated by time, some fairly modern, all unmistakably good. Jerry glanced uneasily from

one face to another, and somehow felt he was standing trial before a ghost jury.

The eyes of an arrogant country squire seemed to demand an explanation of his presence there. A thin, disapproving dowager looked through him with a most disconcerting aloofness. Jerry had the uncomfortable sensation of having received a snub.

It took actual courage to contemplate running that gauntlet of eyes—the eyes of the ancestors of the man whose place he had usurped—to reach the stairs at the far end of the hall. He glanced nervously back at the smiling eyes of the boy, who belonged to his own pea-in-the-pod type, and again felt that reassuring greeting which seemed about to slip over the brim of soft lips. Fortified, Jerry sped on tiptoes past the battery of critical and disapproving eyes.

His subsequent stealthy movements up the stairway made him feel for all the world like a burglar—another ugly term which had a sinister appropriateness. "For, after all," thought Jerry, "what am I doing if I'm not robbing the old and innocent? It's a doggone dirty trick all round, and—"

"Monty dear." The soft voice of Miss Felicity broke in upon his self-accusations.

Jerry raised unhappy eyes to find his adopting aunt standing at the head of the stairs.

"I waited up for you, dear," she said. "It's so good to have you to wait up for. Come into my sitting-room for a few minutes."

She placed Jerry in the most comfortable chair and stuffed a pillow behind his back.

"You mustn't forget you are still something of an invalid." She bustled happily around, getting a tumbler and filling it from a saucepan which steamed on the hob. "Hot milk for you," she purred. "It will make you sleep well."

"You mustn't spoil me this way, Aunt Felicity," protested Jerry. "I'm not used to it—that is, I don't believe I am. You are the one who must be looked after, and just how to do it is going to be my chief concern from now on."

Mis Felicity's hand trembled with emotion and she almost spilt the milk. "Oh, Monty dear, you don't know-no man can know how much a woman really needs-needs, well, just being looked after. Nobody knows how I've longed to have some one to lean onlean heavily on. I don't mean to criticize Providence, but I sometimes wonder if it was quite wise in making an old maid out of me. There's something so reassuring just in the appearance of a man. It must be in the way his clothes are made—the trousers, I mean." She blushed demurely. "They are clear cut and look capable, so different from the indefiniteness and handicappingness of skirts. If I could have hired a man—a gentleman, of course—to travel with me, to frighten guards and waiters, I think I might have been a great traveller. I've wanted to see so many places, but I ask you frankly, can you see me jaunting over the Continent, Africa, and Asia Minor, alone?"

Jerry had to laugh at the unthinkableness of the vision, and shook his head negatively.

"Don't you see, dear, what it meant to me to see you sitting there to-night at the head of the table? It gave me such a sudden sense of assurance I could scarcely keep from bursting into tears, and before the butler."

"Why, you blessed old dear!" cried Jerry, jumping up and taking the glass from her. "Just sit right down in the chair and drink the milk yourself." It was the only thing on earth he could think of doing for her at the moment, and he felt he must do something or die.

"Now," he said, as he in turn became the tucker of

pillows, "that's something like it." He flung himself on the floor like a boy at her feet. "This, auntie, is a photogravure of how affairs are to stand from now on you on the jewelled throne, I at your feet."

Miss Felicity, too overcome for words, mutely mo-

tioned him to drink the milk.

Jerry obediently sipped, then held the glass up to her lips. "We'll make it a loving cup. Fifty-fifty. Your turn now."

Miss Felicity smiled with the delight of a child. The sipping of the milk became imbued with the sanctity of communion.

"See here, Aunt Felicity." Jerry took one of the tiny, helpless hands. "I want to talk to you. This is the first real chance we've had. To begin with——" Jerry paused. It was so darned hard to begin. "Well, the fact is, I feel—that is, I—oh, hang it all! I don't know how to put it, but the plain dope is, I feel like the devil about—about everything. You see, I'm sure you've made some mistake—about me, you know."

"Mistake?" queried Miss Felicity.

"Yes." Jerry put the glass on the floor and took both her hands. "Now, look here, Aunt Felicity, you haven't a proof on earth that I'm really your nephew. There is only the mere accidental fact that I happen to look like him, and, to tell you the truth, I believe they made us by the quantity—just turned us out like—like green peas, you know. I don't know who I am," Jerry prevaricated boldly—"that is, I haven't any proof that I'm any pea in particular, but a sickening conviction comes over me every once in a while that I'm not a Trevider pea at all. Now, suppose another guy turns up some day and turns out to be the real Montagu Trevider, where'd I be? Good Lord! don't you see what a rotten stew I'd be in? To put it mildly, I'd be an impostor."

"My dear boy," was Miss Felicity's only comment.
"But, honestly——" Jerry again began desperately.
"Monty," interrupted Miss Felicity solemnly, "a woman can trust her heart and her instincts even if she can't trust her eyes. Don't you suppose I can intuitively feel the call of blood to blood? We will never discuss this again. There is nothing to be gained by it. My own convictions entirely satisfy me. If, however, they do not satisfy you, and you have, at any time, misgivings, then you may comfort yourself by remembering you have claimed nothing—nothing whatever from the beginning. It was I who claimed you. I claimed you for my own and brought you here."

Jerry bowed his head helplessly. Miss Felicity smoothed his hair as she added:

"You are going to be a great comfort to me, Monty -more than I could ever have hoped. You have changed. I would not have thought of carrying my perplexities to you in the past. I know that I can now. You are older, and there is a dependability about you that fills my heart with comfort." She paused and then said irrelevantly, "I think every one takes advantage of a woman alone. And I'm so tired of pretending a proud unconsciousness. I know I'm not resourceful or capable, and I don't suppose I've got much judgment, but I can't let them see that, can I? I'm ashamed of the condition of things on the estate. During the war, of course, nothing mattered except the war, and one even gloried in the condition of chaos here at home, produced by it. I gladly saw my agent and steward go early in the autumn of '14, and I got along as best I could with the help of the old carpenter whom I made into a sort of steward, but everything seemed to get more and more into a tangle. Things were neglected on all sides. The accounts seemed to get queerer and queerer the more I worked over them."

Jerry lifted his head abruptly, a look of joy irradiating his face.

"I say, Aunt Felicity! I've a bear of an idea. Of course I haven't a spectre of a notion what an agent or a steward does, but I do know something about figures—that is, a sudden conviction has come to me that at some time or other I've tinkered at accounts. I'll have a go at those accounts of yours. And I'd like to try my hand at the other stunts, too. Of course I don't know a blooming iota more about running an English estate than I know about running a Hottentot parliament. But I'll find out how it is done, and you can bet your bottom dollar I'll not 'let George do it!'"

"George?" queried Miss Felicity wonderingly.

Jerry did not heed her question. He was concentrated on his own new enthusiasm. "Why, I'll make the old place hum. I'll guarantee it will be in such apple-pie order in six months you won't recognize it. We'll have no duds lying about. Live wires are what we need."

"But, my dear boy-" began Miss Felicity.

"I'm not in the mood for 'buts,' " cried Jerry impatiently. "Don't waste breath. I'm fired with enthusiasm. I've got to pull this thing off. I never felt this way before about anything—that is, I mean, about anything since I lost my memory. I've got the sort of feeling that gets there. I recognize it. I'm exploding with the pep that puts things across."

Again Miss Felicity began with, "But, Monty dear—"

"Look here, Aunt Felicity," said Jerry, his voice and expression losing the element of lightning and returning to calm, "you wouldn't want to rob me of the chance—my one chance of salvation. . . . Can't you understand? This is my opportunity. It would reinstate my self-respect a little. Even if I should, by chance, turn

out to be—well, somebody else, I can at least know I've been of some service to you, helped to make the estate richer by my having been here, and"—an inspiration came to him—"how do you know but it might be the means of clearing up everything?—in my brain, I mean—restore my memory and all that sort of thing."

Miss Felicity was impressed.

Jerry, seeing the effect produced, worked the vein for all it was worth. A half-hour later found them excitedly discussing plans for the revolutionizing of things. True, Jerry did most of the revolution and Miss Felicity most of the listening, but they mentally remodelled and rebuilt grape and peach houses, replaced old and exhausted wall fruit, restocked the depleted pheasants, and gave notice to the two farmers who had pusillanimously taken advantage of the stewardless Miss Felicity.

It was two a.m. when a weary but sparkling-eyed old lady kissed her supposed nephew good-night. It was after four before Jerry closed eyes which up to the brink of obliterating sleep had been focussed on a constructive future which he felt he could now face with a degree of self-respect, however anomalous his position.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER two hours' sleep Jerry awoke before seven and lay staring contentedly out of the window, through branches of trees, at the far pale blue of the Bristol Channel.

He felt happy. This was a sensation he had not experienced for many months. To awake with a sense of joy in the mere fact of living, to feel a recrudescence of boyish abandon of body and spirit to the day, was intoxicating.

As thought insidiously tempered and eventually usurped mere feeling, his happiness became qualified by a realization of the endless piling up of lie on lie, subterfuge on subterfuge, which this adventure necessitated. Amends could be made, however. There was the dear invertebrate Aunt Felicity. He would keep a man's strong arm around her—and around the estate. No more dallying with a sentimental temptation to break down and confess all. The fable of lost memory must be sustained through the fifth act.

As Jerry breakfasted and replanned with Miss Felicity the miracles which were to be accomplished, he felt a nervous urge to begin at once, begrudging the hours which must be wasted keeping the tiresome engagement with Celia Boughton-Leigh.

When that young lady arrived, she found Jerry standing in the drive so engrossed in conversation with the head gardener, he gave a start as she honked a greeting almost under his nose.

"Get over, Dorothy Perkins," she commanded her terrier. "Make room for your old friend."

The dog bristled as Jerry approached. Her welcome consisted of alternate critical yaps and disapproving

growls.

"Well, of all the sillies!" laughed Celia, shaking the terrier. "And I thought dogs possessed of flawless sensibilities, memories, and loyalties. . . . Dorothy, you are a disgrace to your race."

Dorothy Perkins, unimpressed, devoted all her ener-

gies to preventing Jerry from getting into the car.

Jerry attempted a conciliating pat. The dog snapped. He repeated, "Nice old dog." There's a good kioodle," and other futile beguilements. There was no change in the canine attitude of mind or body.

Celia administered two resounding smacks and yanked the terrier violently to the bottom of the car. Jerry seized the lull of enforced truce and jumped in. The dog reiterated her unchanged sentiments by uncomplimentary grunts and sighs, while she kept Jerry fixed by a corner of the eye scrutiny.

"I can't understand it," said Celia, as she neatly turned a sharp corner of the drive. "I never before knew her to forget a friend. And the idea of forgetting you of all people—after the romps and long walks you two used to have during her puppydom and flapperism. She must be getting old."

Jerry had been made distinctly uncomfortable by the dog's behaviour. How ridiculous it would be to be given away by a mere cur!

"And I had really believed that a dog's instincts were infallible," persisted Celia.

Jerry felt the demand for some comment on his part.

"Six years is a long time."

"Not to a dog."

"Well, then, perhaps it is due to my memory. Per-

haps dogs are so infernally psychological they can sense that sort of thing. Maybe she is resenting my complete forgetfulness of her—for I assure you I'd have taken oath on it I'd never laid eyes on Miss Perkins until ten minutes ago."

Celia cogitated on this and acknowledged there might be something in it, but all the same it seemed rather queer. "Of course," said she, "there can't be any doubt about you-about your being you-but animals are so knowing. Why, there was a horse in France . . . the poor chap told me about it himself. . . . In the autumn of '17 he was going up to the trenches with his regiment and he noticed a number of horses tethered some distance away. One of the horses began to neigh and plunge at the end of his rope. He thought the beast was in trouble, and being a horse lover ran over to see. The horse got more and more excited as he approached, and changed to ecstatic whinneyings. Imagine what he felt when he got close up and discovered his own favourite hunter—commandeered in the beginning of the war! Now that happened in the autumn of '17—three years had passed, and that horse recognized his master among thousands and at a distance of over a hundred yards! What do you think of that?"

"Pretty wonderful."

"Then why should Dorothy forget you in six years? She's always fierce toward strangers, but once she admits any one to her affections they are there for always—that is, up to this performance."

Jerry coughed nervously. He hated persistence in women. He hated the kind of female that gets a theme and harps on it. It was a symptom of latent powers of nagging. He felt like saying, "Oh, hang Dorothy Perkins!" and probably would have, had he not been plunged out of himself at that moment by the car, in Celia's preoccupied care, almost running down a gaunt

figure in clerical black, which had appeared like a shadow from behind a hedge at a bend of the narrow road.

The brake brought them to a halt, and Celia introduced "Mr. Coolie."

Mr. Coolie wrung Jerry's hand with unnecessary violence and gave the dog a violent pat. Dorothy Perkins exhibited an enthusiasm which Jerry regarded as evidence of poor taste.

Celia and Mr. Coolie then discussed a forthcoming game of tennis for the afternoon with that passion for the shredding of trivial details characteristic of the English.

Mr. Coolie eventually returned to a cognizance of Jerry's presence, and said:

"I suppose, of course, you're playing too."

Jerry pled urgent business with Miss Trevider. How could one think of tennis when one's desires all reached toward remaking a world—that is the world that was Tolvean?

"Business!" laughed Celia. "Don't be a silly ass, Monty. You and business!"

Jerry felt peculiarly irritated. His irritation seethed when Mr. Coolie laughed.

When the car was once more purring along, between hawthorn-bordered hedges, Celia said:

"The curate, you know—came since you went away. What do you think of him?"

"Haven't," said Jerry.

"If he'd been a woman you would have. But tell me, don't you think he is remarkable looking? Makes one think of crusades, quests of the Holy Grail, St. George and the dragon sort of thing. Don't you think so?"

"Makes me think of Wiggs."

"Wiggs?"

"Yes. I mean the bad fit of his clothes made me

think of the good cut of Wiggs's."

"You are perfectly horrid this morning," said Celia. "First abusing my dog and now abusing my friend, Mr. Coolie."

"I didn't abuse your dog. She did all the abusing."

"She didn't. She was merely telling me the truth."

"The truth?" asked Jerry rather anxiously.

"Yes. Told her mistress that you are no longer the amusing old pal of former years, but a nasty, ill-tempered brute whom all feminine creatures would be well advised to growl at."

Jerry laughed with relief. "Go on. I seem generally out of luck this morning. Nothing so safe and successful as hitting a manufacture had a large."

ful as hitting a man when he's down."

"Oh, Monty, forgive me!" cried Celia contritely. "I'd forgotten you're not well—not normal. I've been the brute. Here I had planned such a ripping spin for you and I've been beastly and spoiled everything."

"Not in the least. I've had a glorious time," lied Jerry. "Anyhow, I'll tell the world this is some view." He looked out over the vast expanse confronting them from the hilltop just crested. The tawny moorland, red with dying bracken, purplish with heather and flecked with the gold of late gorse, swept in majestic undulations into the blue of distance.

Celia pointed out the furze blossoms.

"You remember the old Cornish saying, don't you?" "What's that?"

Celia looked at him archly as she quoted: "'When gorse is out of flower, then kissing's out of favour.'"

Jerry abruptly got out his cigarette case, as he com-

mented to himself, "Nothing doing."

Celia covered the awkwardness of the smoke-filled silence by going into raptures over the moors, which she likened to the sea. "Oh! how I long to come here

at night alone and walk, or rather swim, in the moonlight. You see, that's one of the erratic things I could do with impunity if I got a blow on the head."

"So you could," agreed Jerry; "though I can't see, for the life of me, why you shouldn't if you want to without the blow. I presume you've had some experience of going out at night unchaperoned if you've driven a motor ambulance."

"But that was France. This is England. Just fancy for one moment Miss Felicity permitting Polly—oh!" She broke off confusedly. "That is, I mean . . ." In her nervousness she fumbled the gear and the car slackened abruptly on its upward climb. "Oh, curse it all!"

Jerry kept a discreet silence.

"Why don't you say something?" snapped Celia.

"Because when a man thinks of nothing to say he's got sense enough to say nothing. Did you ever try that?"

Celia gave him one furious look and lapsed into a muteness which she hoped would be eloquent of the heights and depths of silence which a woman could achieve when she chose.

After this pregnant variety of silence had reigned for fully ten minutes, Jerry remarked that the difference between a man's and a woman's silence was significant. A man's betokened common sense, self-control, or goodhumoured contentment; a woman's was invariably a species of sulks.

To this opinion Celia did not condescend to make a verbal reply, but she made an eloquent one, nevertheless, by turning the car and heading for Tolvean.

Jerry was not naturally a disagreeable person, and he wondered why his nerves were so easily jangled this morning. He had felt so unusually in love with life when he first woke up. Was it Celia who had jarred his nerves? He pondered upon that curious thing which is termed congeniality. It consisted of more than mere similarity of tastes. There were some people who seemed a completion of one's self. It was as if they were the positive of one's negative charge. It must be a form of electricity. Love must be an intensified electrical charge. We speak of people rubbing us the wrong way. One rubs a cat the wrong way and it apparently produces some sort of electrical disarrangement. Celia rubbed him the wrong way. He felt he was tingling with electrical sparks of an uncomfortable and destructive nature. If he were a dog he'd snap. With sudden sympathy he leaned over and smoothed Dorothy Perkins's head. The dog acepted his apology, and gave a reserved response with the tail. Jerry felt curiously relieved.

"Look, Celia!" he cried exuberantly, "I'm forgiven."

"By whom?"

"Dorothy, and, I hope, by her mistress."

"Indeed?" she replied interrogatively. "I was just thinking," she added irrelevantly, "what an absurd figure you'd be in clerical robes."

"Thanks. About as funny as you'd look carrying

soup to the poor."

"Really, Monty, you are unbearable this morning! Thank Heaven, here is the lodge! I am going to drop you here. I thought last night you hadn't changed much. I've altered my opinion."

"Thanks again," said Jerry as he grasped the handle. Then, seized with contrition for his general disagree-

ableness, he turned about impulsively:

"Look here, Celia, we've made a rotten beginning. It's all my fault. Don't send me away feeling like a naughty boy who's been justly spanked."

Celia gave him a magnanimous smile as she mur-

mured, with patronizing sympathy:

"Poor old Monty!"

Jerry's expression suddenly stiffened. He was all

pendulum this morning.

"No," said he furiously. "By George, I won't be pitied—or forgiven in that tone. Either give me your hand and shake—or don't."

Celia held out her hand.

Jerry's pendulum swung to the other extreme. He felt surcharged with contrition. Longing to do something peculiarly apologetic he lifted the hand toward his lips.

Celia jerked it away with a wry expression of disgust.

"Don't be slushy!" she laughed dryly.

The next moment Jerry was staring at the rear of a receding car, as he said under his breath: "Women be damned!"

CHAPTER IX

It had been characteristic west of England autumnal weather for four days. Mists, rain, and wind. Jerry, whose sensibilities seemed to have become sensitized, became aware of the sinsister personality of the Cornish wind. It clutched at windows with wicked fingers, tore down branches with impish wantonness, wailed about the eaves with the voice of gloating old witches.

For four mornings, to the accompaniment of rattlings, creakings, screeches, and moanings, Jerry had worked over the confused estate accounts, and had, at last, produced lucidity, to the bewildered relief and delight of Miss Felicity.

The afternoons, despite every discouraging variety of weather, had been spent in the saddle. Jerry's riding togs already looked more than a year old. Accompanied by a disgusted groom he had ridden over every narrow lane of the estate.

Jerry had come to many conclusions, the most important of which was the conviction that it took time to learn to be an English country gentleman. It would be a great training in patience. Nothing could be done by rapid transit processes in England.

Shiftless, surly, incompetent farmers could not be evicted instantaneously, or "kicked out," as Jerry termed it. It required a long notice according to their leases. The gardener, a stubborn, antiquated old idiot who would suffer death rather than do anything in any way his grandfather had not done it, could become deaf on occasion, and retire into an exasperating preoccupa-

tion, as a turtle into its shell, when confronted with any modern idea or suggestion. If anything radical was to be accomplished in the kitchen garden, Stevens must go. When this conclusion was broken to Miss Felicity, Miss Felicity burst into tears and said it could not be thought of. The Stevens "belonged" on the estate. The grandfather of the present old Stevens had been the gardener for his lifetime, as was his son, the present Stevens's father, and the under-gardener, now in service, who was the great-grandson of the original Stevens, would of course step into his father's shoes when the present old Stevens was laid in the earth, and young Stevens's son—when he had one—would become his assistant and eventual successor, and so on and so on, garden without end.

The old carpenter, who had been temporarily elevated to the stewardship, as a sort of war measure, was apparently at present attending to neither the carpentering nor the affairs of the estate. He had become disorganized. Duties for which he was not trained had made him an incompetent. Yet Miss Felicity insisted he must be treated with due consideration and deposed from his elevation with tactful deliberation, for he was a Trevorrow, and the Trevorrows had "belonged" on the Tolvean estate since the seventeenth century.

"But Stevens and Trevorrow are both doddering old mules, only fit for service in the Dark Ages," protested Jerry.

"But they are ours," said Miss Felicity, with finality, quietly placing them in the category of Cæsar's wife.

"Why, even slavery was better than this state of affairs!" said Jerry. "At least you could sell worthless slaves. How can any English estate ever be modernized if you've got this millstone of tradition round your necks?"

"My dear," said Miss Felicity gently, "loyalty to

old servants and grateful remembrance of the services of their forbears is a finer thing than a possible profit of a few hundred a year more. There is a saying, noblesse oblige, which is perhaps difficult of comprehension to an American mind."

Jerry felt crudely American.

"No wonder you never get rich quick over here," he said, with aspersion.

"Perhaps," said Miss Felicity, "you will find, however, that almost all the English are possessed of incomes—incomes left them by responsible parents or careful relatives, and we live within our moderate incomes contentedly."

There were so many puzzling matters connected with English property—the matter of tithes, for example. Jerry concluded that no American would ever be able to comprehend it—the English themselves seemed to accept without understanding. There was the tithe to the Church of England (irrespective of the fact that the land owner might be a dissenter) and the lay tithe, and a lot of special Cornish tithes, founded on all sorts of local peculiarities.

Since the farmers' riot of thirty years before, the tithe was no longer paid by the tenant-farmer, but by the landlord. As far as Jerry could see, it was the English landlord of to-day who had a hell of a time. Yet he found the farmers full of complaints and discontent. They groused at everything. Much of their discontent was unformulated, taking the form of vague criticism of the Government. Their only real grievance seemed to be that of destruction of crops by game. The game on Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh's estate made havoc with the Tolvean farmers' corn, but they were not permitted to kill. The only compensation they got was a brace of birds when Sir Wilfred had a shoot.

The farmers hoped Miss Felicity would not again

raise many pheasants.

Jerry was horrified by the insanitary condition of the cottages in the village. When he proposed to Miss Felicity that modern plumbing be installed and the open drains of the narrow streets abolished, that good lady had said the villagers were satisfied to live as their forefathers had lived, and they'd probably move if one attempted any changes in their dwelling-places.

He was puzzled by the purchase of houses on "lives." There was an old woman near the village who must shortly leave the home of half a lifetime and go to the workhouse, because by the death of her husband her home had reverted to the Tolvean estate. They had purchased the house thirty years before, and during that time had spent seventy pounds on improvements. Their tenure of it was limited to the lifetime of three individuals—two sons and the father. The sons were both lost in the war. The father had now died-thus the three lives ended, and there was but the workhouse for the survivor. If she'd only been older, she sighed, she might have had the old-age pension and been spared that last of all indignities, the workhouse.

The old-age pension had apparently robbed age of its horrors for the lower classes—the age of seventy became invested with dignity and independence, and was even looked forward to eagerly.

It didn't seem quite just to Jerry, this matter of the house, but when he said so to Miss Felicity, painting a pathetic figure of the old dame, she said it was an unfortunate case. But, with all her kind-heartedness, it was evident Miss Felicity could not be made to see beyond the fact that it was the English law.

How could any one ever produce a revolution in affairs here? thought Jerry, feeling himself balked and arrested at every turn by some time-honoured tradition. custom, or law. He wanted to do things. He felt he knew so well what ought to be done, but one might as well try to modernize the Rock of Ages.

Instead of producing changes, he himself must apparently be the one to change. He must become traditionalized, curbed, restrained, devolutionized into the typical Englishman.

It was like being forced to the measures of the stately minuet, when one felt all for jazz!

The fourth day of Jerry's revolutionary thoughts found England and the Tolvean estate unaltered and unperturbed in their placid immutability. If anything had been accomplished in the way of change, the laurels would have to go to England and the estate. They had already begun an insidious reconstruction of Jerry Middleton.

It was three in the afternoon—an hour and a half yet to tea-time. Jerry was bored. One needed good weather to be contentedly idle in. He was smoked out, he didn't take in anything he read, and he didn't enjoy playing patience, as Miss Felicity did.

He had even, in desperation, thought of Celia Boughton-Leigh, but his last scene with her returned vividly in his memory, and he reiterated the concluding monologue of that occasion. If Jerry had known of the term misogynist he would probably have proudly applied it to himself. No woman could vamp him!

Of course when one damned all women, one didn't include Aunt Felicities and mothers. They were angels—not just mere women. And if one should, by a freak of chance, marry, it would mean one had found another angel in the world.

Thus meditating, Jerry strolled down to the sittingroom of the angelic Aunt Felicity. He found the room occupied only by the ruddy-cheeked Paynter, who was evidently also in search of Miss Trevider.

"The mistress must be gone over to ask after Lady Boughton-Leigh," she said. "The poor creature be sick abed. Her's never been good for much, and never seemed to take proper root here. But us excuses 'er—'er bein' a furrener—comin' from Devon."

"Devon!" cried Jerry. "Then what am I? I came all the way from America."

"But 'ee belongs to be Cornish," defended Paynter. "Anybody could see that as has a eye in 'is head. Yes, 'ee be one of we!"

"Thank you, Paynter. I need compliments to-day. This weather gets in under my skin."

"Yes, sir, it be dirty weather and enough to give all we the sore clunky. But it be grand weather for the herrin'. Scores of gurries goin', I hear. I hopes it ain't bad weather on the sea for crossin'——" She stopped abruptly as if she realized she had made a blunder, and in her subsequent endeavour to divert Jerry's attention seized a book on Miss Trevider's table and held it out.

"Photygraphs be pleasant, sir, to look upon on a dirty day like this 'un. They be what is called snapshots, and if I ain't mistaken, took by yourself, Master Monty."

Jerry accepted the book, flung himself in a chair near the fire, and opened the first page desultorily. He saw various views of the house, rose garden, and surrounding park. He turned the page. A picture of two young people on horseback met his eye. He recognized the unmistakable features of Montagu Trevider—so like his own. But it was Trevider's companion who intrigued him. A slip of a girl of perhaps sixteen, her hatless head, a tumbled mass of wind-dishevelled curls, her eyes laughing and challenging, her smiling, infantile mouth disclosing an eccentrically placed

dimple, near the right-hand corner. And the delicate left eyebrow had that decided tilt which Jerry had come to conclude was another stunt Nature was dotty on reproducing. He had it himself. The real Montagu Trevider had it. The boy in the portrait down in the hall had it—so had the sardonic old dowager. It was fascinating on the girlish young face confronting him, lending an archness of expression, but on the face of the skinny ancestress, down in the hall, it made for a peculiarly withering air of supercilious contempt.

Jerry was now turning the pages with excited interest. By George! here was a whole page of her. He jumped up, found Miss Felicity's magnifying glass, and took the book to the window. He scrutinized picture after picture of the unknown in every conceivable pose and costume.

"She's a bear!" announced Jerry to himself. "The prettiest thing in girl I've ever seen. Who the devil is she? And why has she been kept out of my sight? I hope to the Lord she hasn't gone off and died! Be just my luck to have the first girl I ever took a shine to, be dead as Peck's grandmother."

Gone was his disgust over women. Gone his irritation over England. Gone his fed-up-ness over the weather and gone his boredom.

Clasping the book, he left the room and sped, two steps at a time, up to the floor above. As he hurried down the corridor leading to his own room he heard Paynter's voice saying:

"Dirty weather, Mr. Wiggs, but I hope the sun be shinin' on the sea for Miss Polly. Miss Felicity be expectin' of her a week from to-day." Paynter's voice ceased as she became evidently conscious of approaching steps.

By the time Jerry reached his room Paynter had receded down the back stairs, and Wiggs, with his

usual expressionless expression, was hanging up a pair of cleaned and freshly pressed riding-breeches.

"I say, Wiggs," began Jerry, "come here. You may cease being valet for the nonce and reinstate yourself as head of the Intelligence Bureau." He opened the book and pointed to the unknown charmer. "Who is that? Her face is vaguely familiar," he fibbed blithely, "but for the life of me I can't recall her name."

Wiggs stared down at the photograph, and Jerry stared at Wiggs. Jerry wondered if even death could change the expression of Wiggs. He felt sure Wiggs would lie in his coffin a perfectly correct cadaver of a valet, prepared to meet his Maker with a flawlessly unopinionated blankness of countenance.

After a moment's scrutiny, Wiggs looked up with a clear, unflinching eye and said, "I am trying to think, sir."

Jerry knew he was lying, and admired the magnificence with which his servant was managing a disagreeable feat, for already he realized Wiggs was all for simple truth. He waited patiently for him to arrange matters with his conscience. Wiggs coughed discreetly behind flawless finger-nails and announced: "I think it would be best, sir, to ask Miss Felicity about the young lady. She is naturally better informed on the subject of your acquaintances than I."

"Thanks, Wiggs," said Jerry, breaking into a disconcerting laugh. "You're a corker!"

Wiggs retired hastily, and Jerry, still beaming, sat down and carefully detached the loveliest photograph. On the back he wrote, "Polly," and beneath inscribed, "Discovered the 15th Oct." He then carefully placed the picture in his left-hand breast-pocket.

"So this is Polly!" thought he, with the expression of three cheers. "This is the girl who is now sailing across the sea to me—Me! Great guns! I'm the luck-

iest chap alive. And blessings be on the head of good old Wiggs. The dear old idiot never suspected he'd given the whole show away—told me everything by his loyal silence."

Wiggs returned at that moment carrying resplendently shining, resuscitated riding-gaiters, and said conversationally, "Nasty day, sir."

"Nasty!" laughed Jerry. "You besotted donkey! Why, man alive, it's the most glorious, heavenly day since the beginning of the world! I'm off for a walk, so don't put 'em away. Fetch 'em over."

"But, sir, it's almost tea-time," protested Wiggs.

"Tea be blowed!" cried Jerry. "I'm cram jam full of ambrosia and nectar!"

CHAPTER X

Jerry took no heed of where he walked. He was metaphorically walking on air, though in reality he was mercilessly subjecting the so recently cleaned leather leggings to the mud puddles of the sopping lanes of the Boughton-Leigh estate.

He alternately whistled gaily, as one whose inner song of heart demanded outward musical expression, and lapsed into silence in the middle of a note—silences fraught with too intangible an ecstasy even for musical utterance.

He was transported into a new realm of fantastic and delicious speculations. What amazing vistas were opening before him. . . . A week from to-day Polly would arrive! In what relationship did he presumably stand to this creature of the witching hair, the deep-shadowed, long-lashed eyes, the childish mouth with its downward droop and the absurd misplaced dimple?

He hoped she would at least turn out to be a cousin. If she were a cousin she'd probably be on kissing terms with him. The mere thought of enjoying that privilege of relationship sent an electric sensation shivering down his spine. Nothing but hearing "Dixie" played, when one was on foreign shores, had ever made his back behave like that before. Golly! but it was queer—that a mere thought could do that to your body—just thinking about kissing a girl you'd never seen. . . .

She surely must be some sort of a relative, for had not Celia said, "Imagine Miss Felicity permitting Polly

to walk alone on the moors at night," or something to that effect? That certainly betokened some right of jurisdiction on the part of Aunt Felicity over the actions of Polly.

A sudden thump on the back of his leg, which almost upset his equipose, caused Jerry to turn around sharply. To his astonishment he found himself the object of demonstrations of delight from the dog of Celia Boughton-Leigh. The temperamental Miss Perkins leapt and pawed, with the air of having found an old and treasured friend.

"Inconsistent jade!" said Jerry, as, in spite of himself, he felt a ridiculous glow of pride over the approval, demonstrated in great mudstains on his trousers. The opinion of a dog counted for a whole heap.

The first glow of pride was followed by a distinct feeling of alarm and desire for flight. Jerry naturally presumed the fair owner of the dog might be in close proximity. Dedicated, as his every present thought and emotion was, to the recently discovered Polly, he felt that Celia was the very last member of the feminine species whom he wished to confront. Irrespective of his sentiments, however, he forced himself to a chivalrous halt, just as his legs were making for a pusillanimous leap over the protecting hedge. He'd wait. He did staunchly for over five minutes, then seeing still no signs of the approach of the dog's mistress, gave himself up to the barked invitation of Dorothy Perkins to "come along and rediscover the world with me." The moment he began to follow, Dorothy looked back at him with an expression which said: "Of course, I realize you planned this walk solely for my pleasure." The womanly vanity of her! She then forthwith seemed to dismiss Jerry completely from her mind, darting off on delighted tangents into every tangle and ditch

Jerry pondered on the two different worlds which they inhabited and through which they walked. Brought back from the world of whimsy and dreams, he now saw the pall of grey sky through the fine mist which was noiselessly drenching the leaves. More than half the time his eyes were turned earthward, preoccupied with the sordid affair of avoiding puddles. He was only subconsciously aware of the contour of the trees about, the contorted branches of old gorse bushes topping stone hedges, the rare glimpses of mist-veiled moorland. His eye was turned inward on his own thoughts, his nose was insensitive to the subtle wood odours. Dorothy Perkins's senses, on the other hand, were all turned outward. She did not once look at the sky or notice mud puddles. She was following a myriad trails of mysterious wonder. A trail was only half followed before it was abandoned for some more entrancing allure. Her world of scent and sound was a world of which Jerry had no conception. "We are as far apart as the planets," thought Jerry, "and yet we walk together."

His vagarious thought was brought to an end by the sudden halt of Dorothy, the stiffening of her body and tail and the alertness of upstanding ears. She had heard something outside her own private world. Some one must be approaching. It was probably a cow-man. Dorothy's excuse for a tail announced a recognition of the oncomer even before her instinct was confirmed by visual powers.

Of all people in the world, Wiggs was the last Jerry expected to see, but Wiggs it was, and a Wiggs never before seen. It was a Wiggs of abandoned, unvaleted expression of perfectly normal human worry, most shocking to behold. Jerry, seeing that Wiggs was unaware of a witness, felt it incumbent upon him to make his presence known quickly. It was as unfair as

looking in upon any one in the bath-tub. It was looking upon Wiggs spiritually naked.

"Hello! What is it?" asked Jerry at a distance that

made shouting necessary. "Looking for me?"

The mask quickly fell over the servant's countenance, the shoulders lost their droop, even the clothes of the man seemed to come to attention.

"Yes, sir, for over an hour."

Poor Wiggs! His usually immaculate trousers were bespattered round the ankles, his burberry was dripping, and his hat brim had become a water lead. His appearance was eloquent of the unusual.

"Anything wrong? Nothing wrong with my aunt, I hope. She's not ill?" Jerry hadn't realized until he heard the genuine anxiety of his voice how very pre-

cious the little spinster had become to him.

"No, sir. That is, Miss Trevider is not ill. She sends her compliments, and will you be so good, sir, as to return home as quickly as possible."

Jerry respected Wiggs far too much to press him to reveal anything which he knew Wiggs would feel it outside his province to disclose, so he only said, "All right," and turned about.

Dorothy Perkins stood for a moment at indecision; then, with a sigh over the unreliability of men, resigned herself to Jerry's inconsequence; forsaking the realm of tempting odours under bracken and bramble, she became a dog of responsibilities and headed for home. Jerry did not even miss her. He was preoccupied with conjectures. Only a staccato sentence or two on the weather punctuated the silence between him and Wiggs all the way back to Tolvean.

"In her sitting-room, sir," said Wiggs as he opened the front door.

Jerry felt that his own emotions were those most ap-

propriate for an undertaker or the best man at the marriage altar.

Then, too, the immaculate hall brought a sudden sense of his own bedragglement and mud. His responsibilities to Wiggs demanded things—besides, a bath and clean clothes would delay matters a little, and Jerry confessed abruptly to a desire for delay. He had a nasty premonition of something disagreeable. Yes, he felt decidedly for procrastination and dry boots. But when he suggested to Wiggs that he must clean up before he presented himself to his aunt, Wiggs manifested a spirit above that of the valet. "I would suggest, sir, that you see Miss Trevider first—as you are." The words were merely suggestive, but the tone was commanding.

"Lord! it must be important," thought Jerry, as he meekly went up the stairs. He rapped with a gentleness that suggested a whisper. Somehow the occasion seemed to demand the muffled. He thought the "Come in" sounded a trifle tremulous.

Miss Felicity was sitting stiffly upright in the attitude of one who has waited long and nervously.

"Come in, Monty. I thought you were never coming." She was intertwining her fingers and shifting her feet about. Jerry had always thought of Miss Felicity as the embodiment of calm.

"You were looking for me before tea, Paynter tells me."

"Oh! that was nothing important," said Jerry. "Just sauntered down to see you—been such a beastly day, and——"

Miss Felicity wasn't listening. She interrupted him with the information that she had been over to the Boughton-Leighs'. "I was suddenly summoned," she added gravely.

"Nothing wrong, I hope. Celia hasn't smashed herself up?" asked Jerry.

"No, my dear. It isn't Celia. It's Celia's mother."

"Smashed?"

"No, dying."

"O Lord!"

"You haven't seen her since your return. You probably can't remember her. She hasn't seen any one outside the family for many months—since she had the stroke. She has long been an invalid, poor thing! She has had another stroke, and—and I fear will not last out the night. Sir Wilfred has been telegraphed for."

"Hard luck. I'm awful sorry for Celia," said Jerry sincerely. "But what can I do, Aunt Felicity? I somehow feel you do want me to do something."

"My dear boy—that's the awkward part of it." Miss Felicity was again lacing and unlacing her fingers.

Jerry stared silently at the troubled, flushed face before him.

"You can, Monty." Miss Felicity paused, confused. "Oh dear, I wish I had talked things over with you earlier, but I've been putting it off until you were stronger and yourself again, but now I shall have to be quite frank with you. The truth is, my dear, there was an understanding between you and Celia-in fact, between our two families, which practically amounted to an engagement. It was, of course, not to be announced until you had come down. Then you went away. The match was one of which both Sir Wilfred and Lady Boughton-Leigh entirely approved—in spite of certain traits—certain troublesome tendencies which you had at times exhibited. I need hardly say that the marriage would have been one entirely desirable to me, for I am very fond of Celia. And, from a worldly point of view, it would be advisable because of the two properties

joining, and—well, Celia will have a very handsome dowry—she is the only child, and Sir Wilfred has made

a great fortune in shipping."

Jerry had a sense of suffocation. The room seemed close. He felt as if the walls were closing in on him. He jumped up as Miss Felicity paused and opened a window. What awful tricks had fate up her sleeve for him now? He wanted to run. He stood at the window and stared blindly out on the sopping dusk. He did not turn round when Miss Felicity began to speak again.

"Now you understand, dear, that a tacit engagement existed, with the approval of every one, but your long absence has, of course, made things very difficult and obscure, and your present affliction, your affected memory, has brought about a natural complication. Celia—none of us know where we stand. We have been in a quandary to know what to do—what was best to do. It was Celia's desire that you should not be told of your former relationship to her—her womanly delicacy naturally made her prefer that any renewal of the engagement should be inaugurated—that is, should be the outcome of your desires—due to your attraction towards her."

Miss Felicity paused again. Jerry felt acutely aware of his dampness. He shivered with cold. He was speechless, and thought seemed paralysed.

"Lady Boughton-Leigh has regained her speech. She sent for me." Miss Felicity shot out the sentences nervously. "It is probably only the whim of a dying woman, but . . . oh dear! it's so difficult. . . . Please come over here, Monty, and look at me." Jerry dragged himself across the space and sat heavily in a chair facing Miss Felicity. "Try to realize, dear, how difficult this is for Celia. I can quite understand the

poor child's unhappiness and mortification, but what can she do?"

"Do?" queried Jerry idiotically.

"Yes, do," repeated Miss Felicity inanely. "You see, her mother insists that she cannot die happily unless she knows that Celia is to be happy—that you two are to be reunited. The poor creature is too ill to be argued with. Celia's pride and her love for her mother have waged a fearful battle. The dear child feels that she is being thrown at you, forced upon you—that you are to be coerced into an engagement for which you have no heart. But her love for her mother, her desire to ease her mother's mind at the end, has conquered all else and—oh, can't you see, Monty—can't you see it all and pity her?"

"Good God! See! Of course I see," cried Jerry. "It's a rotten situation for her. What am I to do? I am, of course, at your service," and he added, at what cost only he himself knew, "and at Celia's."

"Oh, Monty!" Miss Felicity's voice broke and she descended to tears.

"If you only could know how loyal Celia was when —when the trouble came—when you went away. She's been loyal all these years—always believing in you, always insisting you would return some day. She and I never lost that faith. It has knitted us very closely together. And Celia has steadfastly refused to encourage the attentions of others—has rejected, to my knowledge, one very advantageous offer." All this had been sobbed out rather than talked.

"Just don't cry, Aunt Felicity," begged Jerry. "Don't cry, for mercy's sake. I understand everything. I'm grateful. God knows I'm grateful, and all I want to do is to please you—to make you happy."

"Then you don't mind renewing the engagement—you do still care for her, you do want to marry her

really? Oh dear! it would be such a relief to my mind—it would make me so happy."

"If it would make you happy I'll marry Celia-or

anybody else," said Jerry.

"Then you are marrying her only to please me,"

said Miss Felicity wearily.

"For Heaven's sake don't let's quibble," pleaded Jerry. "This isn't the time to go into the psychology of the thing. A woman is dying, her hours are numbered. We will act and talk about it later. Shall I order the carriage?"

"Yes, please do." Miss Felicity was again dabbing

her eyes with her handkerchief.

Jerry stumbled out of the room and thought, "Dam'! that blasted primordial atom."

His heart seemed to be beating all wrong; it thumped and then it skipped a beat. He put his hand up as if to steady it, and suddenly felt, in his pocket, the photograph of the unknown Polly. It was for the moment as if his heart had stopped.

CHAPTER XI

The door of the Boughton-Leigh home was opened by a creature of fearful gloom. A pall of silence hung over the hall. The whole atmosphere, so to speak, reeked of finality. Miss Felicity and Jerry sat in the hall to wait. It was like waiting outside the door of eternity.

Jerry felt hysterical. It took every ounce of selfcontrol to restrain himself from maniacal tears and laughter. The preposterousness of the situation which an unscrupulous fate had forced upon him was absurdly horrible.

He wished to God he had not, once upon a time, said "Shut up" to his conscience. He wished he had held on tight to the guiding reins of his own life-but could he have? Was he an independent, free agent? Who or what had sent the thought of the solution to him? Could he have resisted its beckoning had he wanted to? All life seemed a damnable trap. Poor, vain human beings thought they were playing their rôles as they chose, according to the dictates of their desires of their conscience, when in reality they were mere helpless puppets dancing to the order of some impish power that laughed as it yanked the strings. Or, again, it was like a chessboard—this ridiculous world—where frenzied, absurd, self-vaulting fools thought themselves moving with infinite calculation and skill toward inevitable victory—a victory of their own planning. And they were but the pawns of Fate!

Oh! the farce of it all! The inconsequent cruelty of

it all! And the unthinkable injustice of everything. Here we are born into this world handicapped or blessed by the evil or good qualities inherited from those whose blood flows through our helpless veins. A poor wretch comes into life cursed—a predestined-by-inheritance criminal! his instincts are all for evil; he lives in accord and harmony with his instincts, his inherited traits, and the world imprisons him or puts him to death. He pays the price of perfect consistency. Again we are told by the religionists that we are born into the world imbued with a universal predilection for sin, a preternatural tendency to err, yet when this omnipotently bestowed frailty gets the better of us and we sin, we fall on our knees and chivalrously take upon ourselves all blame, praying for forgiveness! It would be far more honest, thought Jerry, to stand up like a man and curse high Heaven. Why should we apologize, grovel, cringe? It was Fate, Nature, God-call it what you will, which owed mankind an apology! . . .

Jerry wrenched his thoughts with difficulty from his inward seething to listen to Miss Felicity, who was only murmuring a concern over Jerry's dampness. She had just realized for the first time his rain-sodden clothes. What was a possible chance of taking cold, beside this horrible cataclysm which he was facing—a betrothal to a woman for whom he had to confess a feeling of distaste almost amounting to antipathy?

The grim hush of the house got on his nerves more and more. It was like a prelude of the vast silence of death itself. Doors softly opening and shutting in the distance had a tone of affrighted percussion.

The creature of gloom reappeared. They were requested to go upstairs. Jerry rose and, as he followed the servant and Miss Felicity, felt he was a somnambulist. The powerless sense of somnambulism brought with it a resignation—the resignation which probably

mercifully dulls the victim on the way to the scaffold. The inevitable carries its own anæsthetic.

He wondered abstractly what Celia's present emotions were. He hoped they were only grief—all-obliterating grief. He hadn't even the distraction of grief.

They paused outside the door. The servant entered alone. Miss Felicity seized the opportunity of the pause to press Jerry's hand with gratitude and perhaps a desire to bestow encouragement.

The door opened. The servant, in the whisper of the sick-room, bade them enter.

The spectacle confronting Jerry seemed like a gruesome dream. On a gigantic four-post bed lay enthroned a figure of cadaverous face, with eyes dilated and paralysed to a wide, unearthly stare. The eyes seemed to blot out everything else in the room.

It was with a positive physical effort that Jerry disengaged his own from those of the dying woman and looked away. Then he saw Celia. She stood on the left of her mother, her face pallid and set. On the right of the bed sat the curate, Mr. Coolie, like an owl in the ivy.

At the sight of Mr. Coolie visions came to Jerry of a special license, and a marriage in the presence of the dying. Anything was possible—such is the tyranny of death. Betrothal, yes—but marriage—no, no, a thousand times no! He must be given time to adjust himself to the thought of marriage.

He had stood transfixed about four feet from the door. Miss Felicity gave him a signalling look.

He automatically moved and felt himself drawn toward the bed, as toward some weird magnet.

No one had yet spoken. The air of the room seemed to pulsate with the laboured breath of the dying woman. It was the only evidence of life there. The dying alone was the animate and vibrating.

Lady Boughton-Leigh was muttering. Mr. Coolie stood and bent his head to hear, then interpreted that she desired that Jerry would stand at the foot of the bed in range of her vision, and that there be more light so that she might see him clearly.

Jerry dragged leaden feet to the commanded position. As the light came flooding upon him he felt like an actor in the limelight. He was transfixed by those frozen eyes. They seemed to penetrate through to his brain cells, to intrude upon his most intimate thoughts, to invade his very soul—the soul of Jerry Middleton. If the dying woman had cried, "Impostor!" Jerry would have felt no surprise. It would have been relief. He longed for exposure, reprieve, deliverance.

Then he realized that Miss Felicity was gently forcing Celia toward him. He turned and looked into the tear-stained, twitching face of the girl and forgot himself. Human sympathy alone controlled and inspired him. He heard himself saying, "Celia."

Celia raised her head and gazed at him with the expression of one whose pride is in the dust, of a woman thrust naked in the marriage mart. As Jerry looked, he recognized a fellow-pawn in the hands of a sardonic Fate.

A great flood of pity and indignation carried him beyond himself. He felt greater, more merciful than Fate. He felt avenging. He'd cheat Fate of his triumph over this poor broken pawn, he'd rob him of the victory of a woman's humiliation, he'd proudly shelter this latest victim from the conscienceless infamy of the Player-with-the-tongue-in-cheek.

Chivalrously, proudly, he put his arms about the quivering girl, and held her to his throbbing heart. His passion was akin to that of a mother.

He bowed his head and reverently laid his lips on

Celia's hair as he consecrated himself, his life, to the service of defeating Fate.

He felt the form in his arms shaking as if with ague. Imperceptibly the girl released herself from his hold and walked unsteadily away.

Jerry's eyes were then drawn irresistibly back to those of the dying woman.

Her distended eyes now hold an uncanny relief, triumph—the triumph of the omnipotent dying.

Jerry did not know how he got out of the room, and he only gradually became conscious of the fact that he was descending the stairs accompanied by the St. George-and-the-Dragon curate. He became aware that Mr. Coolie was saying something about the "lamentable passing of that estimable soul," a sentence which somehow sounded indecent to Jerrys' acutely overwrought sensibilities.

The curate piloted him into the library, sat in the downiest chair, and engaged himself in the apparently absorbing and gratifying pastime of seeing how carefully he could fit the tips of all of his fingers together.

Then Mr. Coolie talked, said all the most flawless platitudes appropriate to an occasion of impending death.

The more he talked the more Jerry found himself resenting Mr. Coolie and his manner. His manner was that of a smug master of heavenly ceremonies. Jerry thought he looked like a celestial floor-walker. Mr. Coolie spoke with the authority of one who alone, among them all, was conversant with the realm to which that soul upstairs was impalpably winging. He spoke with the intimacy of one who is the confidant of the Deity.

Jerry got up and paced restlessly. He wanted to get away. What need to tarry now? The engagement had been tacitly renewed. What more was necessary?

Was he expected to wait—wait till the last scene was over upstairs?

He longed to smoke, but a cigarette would seem a frivolous relaxation, a luxurious affront in the presence of the unearthly Mr. Coolie.

A servant entered as noiselessly as a spirit and looked, rather than announced, supper.

Supper, of all things! Even though a woman lay dying upstairs meals must come and meals must go.

He entered the dining-room to find Celia awaiting them, at the head of the table, with calm dignity. All traces of recent tears had been miraculously removed from her cheeks, the pinched look seemed mysteriously ironed from her countenance. Only a reddened tint of eyelids remained to affirm Jerry's last memory of the agonized face he had sheltered against his heart.

He marvelled at the recuperative powers of women. Aunt Felicity remained upstairs to keep vigil with the nurse. The doctor, whose active services were at an end, was there at the table. He had now only to wait. One might as well eat while waiting.

A conversation of sorts, piloted by Mr. Coolie, achieved itself spasmodically. Celia spoke but little, but maintained the consideration of the hostess—the butler having been dismissed from the room—seeing to the comfort of her guests, the refilling of glasses and the replenishment of their plates—especially that of Mr. Coolie, who, however spiritually minded, evidently possessed a stomach frankly human.

No reference was in any way made to the life-drama drawing toward its curtain fall on the floor above.

A telegram from Sir Wilfred was brought in. All thoughts were abruptly recentred on the cause of their presence in the house. A half-frightened, almost apologetic, cessation of the click and rattle of eating utensils made for a respectful reception of the message from the

absent one. Sir Wilfred had taken the night train. He would arrive in the morning. Mr. Coolie's expression was as if he thought aloud: "Let us hope it will not be too late."

The doctor, the only authority on the question, looked unopinionated, and, as if feeling the interruption had been given sufficient and due respect, fell to and ate with renewed gusto.

Celia in her turn, with the putting aside of the telegram, seemed to dismiss the thoughts coincident with its receipt, and asked Mr. Coolie if his hopes for a holiday in town in November were to be gratified and when he expected the vicar back.

Jerry felt his admiration for Celia ever increasing as the meal went on. Her restraint was magnificent.

As they rose she beckoned to Jerry; leaving Mr. Coolie and the doctor to the solace and enjoyment of the port together, he followed her into the hall.

She turned, the old look of distress upon her face, and asked piteously: "I can't help by going up, can I?"

"No," said Jerry.

"I feel as if I couldn't endure it up there again. Oh! the hours and hours on end of it to-day. . . . I am stifling. I must get out."

"Shall we walk on the terrace?" suggested Jerry.

"Yes, please." She opened a closet and found two mackintoshes. "We don't want anything over our heads, do we? It will feel so good—the rain in our faces."

He put the mackintosh on her with a new tenderness. The mood of consecration had returned. They passed out into the dark and the rain. He offered Celia a cigarette, but she declined. He smoked as they tramped. The only sound was that of footsteps falling on or sucking up from the soaking sod of the terrace.

They pursued each their private train of thought, and neither wondered what the other was thinking. Only after an hour had passed and fatigue brought Celia to a desire for indoors and a chair, did the thought occur to Jerry of the similarity of the experience of the past hour with Celia and that of the afternoon with Celia's dog.

Their bodies had walked together—his and Celia's—but their minds and souls had traversed paths of thought and feeling as far apart as the stars in space.

Oh! the loneliness of life—the loneliness of the human soul—never once, in all its journey through life, merging one-millionth of an inch within the orbit of a fellow-soul!

CHAPTER XII

THREE days and nights had passed like a nightmare. The days had been interminable blanks, the nights palpitant, distorted horrors. "Le tourment et le sommeil ne sont pas camarades de lit."

The funeral was over. Jerry, just returned from that culminating trial, flung himself on the couch in his own room and lit a cigarette. He put the black funereal gloves on the table. As he did so, he marvelled anew at the amazing prescience of Wiggs.

Dazed by his own inner chaos, Jerry had taken no thought of his needs in the way of appropriate funereal wearing apparel, but Wiggs had. When Jerry emerged from his bath that morning he had found the magician Wiggs holding, for the reception of his legs, trousers of a lugubrious mournfulness of hue, while all the other cloth relatives of gloom lay awaiting their victim on the bed. There was nothing lacking to complete the perfection of mourning-crêpe band on the sleeve and crêpe sheath around the sombre new stiff hat. Lying to one side, and looking indecorously like dead chicken feet, were the awful gloves. These accoutrements of death seemed to fill the room with a sense of bereftness. Jerry felt himself pervaded by grief-abstract, impersonal, foundationless grief. He hadn't know Lady Boughton-Leigh, he'd never seen her but for those hideous minutes of inquisition in her chamber of death, and he felt nothing for her but resentment. Yet now, because of those infernally melancholy garments incident to her funeral, he was suffering as much as if he'd

lost a beloved friend. The incredible influence of colour, of clothes, of association!

When completely robed and approved by Wiggs, Jerry had sedately marched downstairs to the inner accompaniment of a muffled drum and the poignant notes of Chopin.

Into his mind had flitted two lines he had once heard:

"When the struggle of life is over, And the trouble of dying is done. . . ."

What a trouble it all was to be sure—he now thought again, as smoking he called Wiggs and said: "Get these damned duds off me and bring my dressing-gown."

It was astonishing how soon one grew accustomed to the ministrations of a slave. Jerry supposed it was in his blood—an inheritance from his maternal slave-owning Southern ancestors.

As Wiggs stooped and removed his master's shoes, replacing them by comfortable house pumps, Jerry had the half-bored expression of a cat being stroked. He might have even purred if he'd known how to; purring alone would have been an adequate expression of the contentment produced by Wiggs's attentions.

As the servant removed the black gloves from the table, Jerry hoped he'd burn them. To save them would savour nastily of anticipation, expectation.

The room, cleansed of all reminders of death, seemed suddenly to take on a higher key in colour and note. The fire crackled jauntily, the windows rattled merrily to the tune of a blithesome breeze. It was the quick-step of the band on the return from the grave.

Yet that now blithesome wind had tortured Jerry through all the interminable hours of the night before.

It had twisted his thoughts as it had twisted the trees. It had howled and hissed like a demon, suggesting to an insomnia-distorted mind hurricanes at sea—a ship pounded by merciless, giant waves, decks swept by tons of water, lifebelts frenziedly donned, lifeboats put out and swamped . . . sea strewn with wreckage and human flotsam.

Lying as he now was before the cheery fire in a sun-dappled room, watching a curtain curtsying coquettishly to the breeze which flirted with it through the open window, Jerry marvelled at his insanity of the night before. How impossible it was ever to recapture a gone emotion! What utterly different creatures we are at different hours—and each incomprehensible to the other. He looked back on that which was himself the night before with stupefaction. He had been mad -mad with terror and fear-fear of the loss of a girl whom he had never seen. He had longed to praypray some omnipotent Being to safeguard Polly-divert disaster from that helpless little form. He had got as far as "O God!" but the embarrassment of selfconsciousness, to one unaccustomed to supplicate the Deity, had held him there, metamorphosing his tentative prayer prelude into a sort of blasphemous exclamation.

When he had awakened, after a troubled doze toward morning, and seen the sun and heard the tempered wind he had pretended to himself that he was glad only because of the poor creature who was to be laid to rest that day. Such are our self-deceits.

He even now stubbornly maintained he had been glad for Celia's sake. The girl's face haunted him—that pinched, tearless, burnt-out face, just glimpsed that morning as she was led away from the closed coffin by Aunt Felicity. He had curiously realized himself

feeling all the concern, tenderness, responsibility of a lover without any of the love or passion.

They had not spoken since their parting that night, after the walk in the rain on the terrace, when Celia had merely said, "Thank you, Monty, for not having talked."

He was now puzzled to know what to do next. Should he write, or ought he to call? He dreaded doing anything. A solution now presented itself. "When in doubt send flowers," thought he, and, leaning over, pulled a bell cord.

"Violets, Wiggs. Have the gardener pick a big bunch

and take them over yourself."

Wiggs did not ask where he was to take them. He was trained in mind-reading.

Jerry spent a half-hour over the card. His instincts were all for the non-committal. His judgment and heart dictated a decent expression of condolence. Eventually the message ran: "Dear Celia,—These go to you with my sympathy and—"

"Write it, dam' you—write it like a man," he ordered himself, but his hand still halted. "You'd be a rotter to say less—and what's a mere word?" His hand moved, and he added the word "love."

To his memory came the encounter that morning with Sir Wilfred and the silent but unmistakably meaningful greeting. It had been but the passing of an arm about Jerry's shoulder, but it held his acceptance of a future member of the family.

The renewal of the engagement had been metaphorically announced to the county by Jerry's position beside Sir Wilfred in the carriage which followed immediately behind the hearse.

Jerry had been conscious of the interested gaze of onlookers as he had passed out of the churchyard, Sir Wilfred leaning heavily upon his arm. He was glad Celia had been spared the ordeal of stares. He quite approved of the English custom of keeping women away from funerals. He was also glad that Celia hadn't been subjected to the exalted Mr. Coolie, with his voice of exaggerated gloom, and the uplifted eyes of the crusader. He was sure Mr. Coolie had enjoyed his own dramatic elocution in his rendition of those interrogations regarding "sting" and "victory."

And probably that odious Coolie would next be mouthing the marriage ceremony—orating it over him, Jerry Middleton, and Celia Boughton-Leigh! Jerry could even hear the exact tone in which Mr. Coolie would pronounce the doom and threat of "Whom God hath joined together let no man—"

Great heavens! It couldn't be done—it mustn't be done. It would be criminal. Jerry paced the floor. "I can't let the girl marry me, Jerry Middleton, under a delusion that she is marrying the man she loves. This blessed farce has got to be ended—somehow. Here am I, a penniless adventurer—"

"Luncheon will be served in fifteen minutes, sir. Will you change—put on your coat?" Wiggs's voice seemed to Jerry to come to him out of another world.

He turned almost startled eyes upon his servant.

"Change? Yes. Oh, Wiggs! I wish to God I could change my soul as well."

Jerry looked so white and queer. Wiggs, without a word, laid the coat on a chair, went to a side table, and prepared a whisky and soda.

Jerry accepted it without comment and swallowed

it almost in one breath.

"Wiggs, did you ever wish to the Lord you were somebody else?"

"No, sir; can't remember that I have."

"Do you mean to say you are perfectly content to be who and what you are?" "Yes, sir, I am, especially now that you have returned."

"I?" cried Jerry, turning to look at Wiggs. "Do you mean to say you've got any feeling—personal feeling about me—that you like me?"

Wiggs looked positively shy and actually fingered

a book on the table.

"Well, sir, begging your pardon, I would say, how could any one do otherwise? You see, sir, you are such a likeable and considerate young gentleman. If I had to be changed into somebody else, Mr. Montague, I'd make so bold, sir, as to hope I might be changed into some one just like you."

Jerry stared, his mouth open. He was nonplussed. "You're a goddam concentrated jackass!" he said. The tone was almost brutal, but his heart glowed with gratitude to the humble Wiggs. Five minutes ago he had hated himself, felt ready to blow his brains out, and now a little flattery from a doting idiot of a servant actually made him feel life was worth more than a ha'penny dam', even worth the trouble of seeing it through.

After all, if he had to become plain Jerry Middleton again, next to the loss of Aunt Felicity the parting with Wiggs would be . . .

Jerry looked at Wiggs. Wiggs lifted his eyes as if feeling the summons in Jerry's, and as he beheld therein two unshed tears, Wiggs almost lost grip of his own mask. They gazed silently at each other and from eye to eye there flashed a second's message spanning all gulfs separating class from class, race from race. As Jerry strode from the room he thought, "Hang it all! I actually believe I'm growing fond of Wiggs."

CHAPTER XIII

It was not until the forenoon of Monday—the second day after the burial of Lady Boughton-Leigh—that Jerry called at the home of Celia.

He entered the morning-room to find Mr. Coolie just taking his departure. On shaking Jerry's hand the curate evidently tried to compress both greeting and farewell. The resulting ache suggested that one's hand had experienced imprisonment in a vice.

Celia welcomed him with a sweet natural calm.

Jerry's eyes strayed to a bowl on the table filled with violets.

He felt curiously tongue-tied and shy when left alone with Celia. What did one do when left alone with one's betrothed? He wished to goodness Mr. Coolie had remained. For once he yearned for that sustaining, yet ethereal, presence.

He heard himself mouthing perfunctory inquiries about Celia's state of health, and forgot to listen to the replies.

Mercifully at this juncture Dorothy Perkins bounded into the room, bestowing an overwhelming welcome on Jerry.

Celia looked both surprised and pleased. "I see," said she, "that Dorothy is trying to make amends for her gracelessness that first day."

Jerry thought it unnecessary to refer to the walk which he and the terrier had taken together.

"She has evidently come to her dog senses and recovered her memory," commented Celia. Dorothy, inwardly reminiscent of her last experience with Jerry, was all for another ramble; with beguiling barks, leaps, and suggestive runs to the door and then back to Jerry, she said as plainly as though she had words to her tongue that the house was no place to remain in on a day like this.

"Poor dear," said Celia, "she must have missed her

daily outings with me in Charon or on foot."

"Shall we give in?" asked Jerry, feeling any action would be a relief. "What about a walk?"

"I'd love it. I'd almost forgotten there is an out of doors. This house has become horrible—a prison." Celia sighed, and Jerry's heart instantly warmed a little toward her. His sympathies were easily stirred.

With Dorothy bounding ahead like a Jack rabbit they set forth down the lane. After a rather long and thoughtful silence, Celia said: "Mr. Coolie has been most kind. He has spent every moment he could spare with me since—since everything happened. He realizes how heavily time will now hang on my hands and he is going to permit me to help him. I can help in many ways, you see, in parochial affairs, though it had never occurred to me until he pointed it out."

"What do you do when you help?" asked Jerry

vaguely, and without interest.

"Oh, it seems that the field is almost limitless," said Celia. "In fact, my head is whirling with visions of all the new spheres of usefulness he has opened up to me. To begin with, I am to have the infant class in the parish Sunday school."

"Lord! that would terrify me stiff," declared Jerry, "but I suppose you are up on all that sort of thing."

"Not in the least," confessed Celia. "You see, father is rather queer about—well, religious matters—that is, he doesn't concern himself awfully with them, and he has never encouraged mother or me to any great ac-

tivity in the parish. He, of course, contributes largely, but I think that is simply because he believes in upholding all institutions of the State. Then unfortunately he doesn't like the vicar—you see, the vicar is not exactly well-bred, and father *doesn't* understand Mr. Coolie. Why, he once actually said he believed, with Mr. Coolie the Church of England came first, tea second, and the British Empire third."

Jerry laughed, and felt that Sir Wilfred must have a good deal of perspicacity, only he didn't use that word.

"He really doesn't know Mr. Coolie—not as I do," defended Celia. "Mr. Coolie is going to give me daily instruction in doctrinal matters—in short, I am to enter a sort of infant class myself, so I'll be prepared to take over the real infants. Then he wants me to take charge of a needlework guild."

"What do they do?" asked Jerry, feeling bored to death with the ecclesiastical trend of the conversation.

"Make garments for the heathen," said Celia.

It seemed sheer impertinence to Jerry to make garments for the heathen—in fact, to interfere with the lives of the heathen in any fashion, but he held his tongue.

Celia was talking again. "Then there is district visiting to be done and for home work—just for off hours, you understand—I am to be given stoles and surplices and altar cloths to embroider."

"I wouldn't think there'd be any off hours," said Jerry dryly. It all sounded to him like set tasks of penance. And why should Celia be subjected to penance because cast down temporarily by a natural sorrow for the loss of her mother? But it was none of his business. If Celia's father put up with this nonsense it certainly wasn't Jerry's place to interfere.

"Mr. Coolie is always so inspiring," said Celia. "He makes one feel like going forth to conquer."

"He certainly does make one feel like fighting," said

Jerry.

Celia looked a little troubled for a moment, as though trying to fit the tone and Jerry's expression to his words. She lapsed into a silence, probably filled with anticipatory parish activities, and heaped with embroidery silks, while Jerry on his part was mentally rehearsing words he had been saying over to himself for days. This was his chance to say them. They had to be said sometime.

"Celia," he began, with a nervous hammering in his ears, "may I talk to you—about ourselves?"

Without looking at him, Celia murmured an assent. "First of all," said Jerry, "you must know that Aunt Felicity has told me—of much that I would not otherwise have been in a position to realize because—because of the defect in my memory. It's that very defect I must talk to you about. I feel the difficulty of your position. . . . Lord! it must be rotten for you. . . . I want you to know how grateful I am for—for the honour you've done me—that is, the trust you've put in me. . . . I feel so darned unworthy—"

Celia was listening, but she said nothing to help out

or encourage.

"To begin with," Jerry went on, "I feel that my position—I mean condition—rather unfits me for the—that is, I don't feel I should be given the responsibility of any woman's future. You must realize that having once suffered from this—this affliction, I may again be seized with it—I mean I might lose my memory again."

"Or you might recover it," interrupted Celia.

"I may, and that's just the point I want to make. I've thought this thing over till I'm dizzy and I've almost gone batty, but I've reached one decision. It's

the only fair one—to you. Whatever my personal desires in the matter may be—they've got nothing to do with it. I cannot let you marry me until my memory is natural—until it comes back. When that day dawns, and I can come to you with a clear conscience and a clear head and ask you to share my life—then it will be a different matter. But I can't and won't let any woman take to herself a past that is unknown to her—and that is what I represent to you this minute. Nor can I let any woman share a future as uncertain as mine—as the future I'm facing myself."

Celia walked toward a lichen-covered stone by the hedge and motioned Jerry to sit beside her.

"Thank you, Monty, for all you've said. It was good of you to think so much of me and so little of yourself. I appreciate it, and frankly it makes things easier for me—relieves my mind. You see, I too have had my misgivings, and I might as well make a clean breast of everything. I'll have to rather bare my heart to you, but . . ."

Jerry took her hand gently, with a desire to convey sympathy. Celia did not repulse him.

"You see," said she, "I was a mere child when you went away—only nineteen. I had never known any boy as intimately as I had known you—all our earliest memories were identical and all our life associations were the same. . . . Then there was the glamour of the girl-and-boy love affair between us—kept secret until we were discovered, and then almost thrown at each other by our respective families! Then you got into trouble. . . All the feminine in me—the protective—was up in arms in your defence. Then you disappeared. . . . Can't you see?—you became the figure of romance—because of your disappearance and the cloud under which you had gone. A woman's a queer creature. I don't now believe that I was

ever really in love with you until you disappeared. A woman's imagination and loyalty can do strange things with her heart. Every memory of you was fertilized by a romantic imagination; all your ordinary qualities took on a transcendent perfection. I idealized you out of all resemblance to the real you. This abnormal work of the imagination continued through six years—continued subconsciously even through the preoccupation of war. But I think I grew up more during the war than I realized—one developed, matured more in one month in France than in a year of peace in England. I think I found out how much I had grown up—or rather outgrown—only when you came back. . . .

"You came back the same Monty—that is, outwardly you were very little changed—only older—and you probably possessed all the same fundamental qualities of character, but you were not the Monty which my absurd imagination had created during those years of absence."

those years of absence."

"I see," said Jerry. "And," he added, with a curious lightness of heart, "you find you don't love me."

"I don't know what I find," Celia confessed. "That's the difficulty. I certainly have an affection for you—it comes to me suddenly sometimes when I look at you and you don't speak, but there's no—no thrill—none of the romance I felt when I used to think of you and imagine what it would be like when you did return. . ."

"When I speak it disappears—the illusion of—of affection?" asked Jerry.

"Well, yes, it does. You see, your voice seems different from my memory of it. Your way of talking—so much less Americanized-Oxford, so much more—so to speak—cinema-American. Why, even

your handwriting is different—changed, grown bolder, and more—I hate the word—but artistic. When I saw the card which came with the violets—for which, by the way, I haven't yet thanked you—it gave me the same sensation which I had that morning in the car—that you were a stranger—not the old Monty. . . ."

Jerry got out a cigarette and smoked. The conversation made him feel disagreeably close to the edge of a precipice.

Celia laid a hand on his free one.

"Don't think I don't want to play cricket. . . . I'm game, but we've got to face the facts. What are we going to do?"

"God knows!" said Jerry. "It's up to you. I'll do anything you want. Think about yourself—don't consider me—I'm not worth it."

With a quick impulse of the recrudescence of something left over, Celia put her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Monty, forgive me. I've hurt you. I've been thinking and talking a heap of bunkum. I must still care—surely I must after all these years. . . . The fault must lie in me—in some sentimental, absurd romantic substance in my character. Then perhaps I'm only overwrought. I've suffered so much this past week. . . ."

Jerry put his arms around her and held her to him in a mute agony of internal chaos. This softened, humanized Celia was a difficult proposition.

"My dear," he said at last, "it's not your fault. It's mine and Fate's. We are tangled up in a barbed-wire contraption set by the gods and we've just got to stay put, whether we like it or not—for the present. Let the future solve our problem. We can't. For the present, think of me as on probation. If the old love returns—in you for me—then I'm yours—when

my mind gets normal, my memory comes back, and I know—know just where I'm standing. We can't do any more—now can we?"

"No," said Celia. "But it's all just our secret, Monty, isn't it—my ridiculous misgivings and your—your self-distrust? We'll keep up the bluff of feeling like the normally engaged, won't we?—for father's and Miss Felicity's sake."

"Sure," said Jerry. Celia held her face up as a child might to its benefactor and Jerry knew what was expected of him.

He hesitated only a second, then bent his head and kissed her. He felt no more emotion than if he had kissed Aunt Felicity.

Celia's face flushed, and she withdrew with a sensation of having experienced a profanation. It was as though a passing stranger in the streets had laid his lips on hers.

She sprang up and whistled for Dorothy Perkins.

"I'm going."

Jerry rose.

"You won't mind if I ask you to let me go alone," she begged.

Jerry reseated himself and lit another cigarette.

He liked Celia better at that moment than he had ever liked her before. She had tact. She realized that he needed to be alone. His deduction was masculine. Her impulse of flight was feminine.

CHAPTER XIV

JERRY awoke on Wednesday morning with a thrill as he told himself, with a fanfare of trumpets in his heart, "This is the day of Polly's arrival!"

He felt the excitement which coursed through his veins to be almost unaccountable. It must surely be simply the lure of the mysterious. Every one had been at such pains to keep Polly and her advent a secret. His imagination had been fashioning a fantastic fabric around the thought of Polly ever since he had overheard the fragment of conversation between Aunt Felicity and Celia that first night. The next link was the sentence dropped by Celia on the drive, then came the discovery of the photographs, to be followed by the overheard remark of Paynter to Wiggs about the crossing of the unknown voyager. He, it appeared, was the goal to which Polly was sailing, while Polly to him had become the centre from which his every thought radiated.

He had looked at the photograph so often, he could now see it with his eyes shut. He did not pretend to himself that he was in love with a mere photograph—that would be absurd. He doubted if he'd ever fall in love with any one. Yet even he had his ideas of the thing—he thought he had enough imagination to picture what love would be like, if it ever came. He certainly knew enough to know that the sympathy, and even tenderness, which he at times felt for the girl to whom he had been involuntarily betrothed, was not love—that amazing emotion for which men had abdi-

cated thrones, wrecked homes, sacrificed honour, died of despair.

No, he knew nothing of the passion which deals

only in extremes.

But of course even a self-contained unit—such as he deemed himself-had ideals. He knew what he liked in women, he knew what he wished they would look like, and he did not see why all of them seemed to vary so far from his ideas on the subject. It just chanced to be a happy coincidence that this photograph of Polly looked like the notion he had had of what a really lovely girl ought to look like. But she'd no doubt be disappointing when she came to life. . . . She'd probably have violently wrong political opinions, be obsessed about saving something—heathen or white slaves—or be mentally squeegeed on the subject of reincarnation. He'd met girls with the faces of Dresden shepherdesses, who had turned out to be loaded. The most flippant-looking bit of fluff would probably inundate you with seas of erudition—the possessor of a dozen dimples might lilt occult catch phrases. The girl of to-day was always full of surprises. The one thing she wasn't full of was charm.

Now, there was Celia—good-looking enough girl, knew how to wear her clothes, had character, too, and her war record was brilliant. But, hang it all, she hadn't an ounce of charm! So, after all, the thing simmered down to personality—and a personality which somehow, even if it didn't embody your previous ideal, might fascinate you into the formulation of new ones. However, even if he found no fascination in Celia, he now liked her. He felt on comfortable terms with her and himself since that clearing-the-deck talk. Since that talk he had felt somehow shriven. What a singular position was his—that of having to play a rôle of

sheer deception with the instincts of an honest man. It required a preposterous attitude of straddle.

Then, too, he found within himself the stirring of new, strange things—it must be England getting hold of him. . . . He felt a curiously quixotic pride in the name he bore, he felt an obligation to keep the escutcheon of Trevider unsullied—he couldn't have felt more responsibility of family had he been born at Tolvean. He'd been forced by Fate to wear the motley of Trevider, but, by Heaven, he'd wear it proudly and as decently as a man could in a false position! He owed that to Miss Felicity, and to the girl whose destiny had been linked with his by the hand of death itself. And he owed it—the fact came to him startlingly for the first time—to the absent Montagu Trevider himself.

Jerry had a sudden weird fantasy—a vision of himself after death, before the Judgment Seat, giving an account of the lives and souls of an inextricably mingled, indivisible, hyphenated being—a composite Montagu Trevider-Jerry Middleton.

This thought came to him inappropriately sandwiched between toast and marmalade at breakfast. It was dispersed by Miss Felicity, who brought him back to the immediate present by a request that he would join her in her morning-room after he had finished his coffee and cigarette.

He found the little lady with the frown between her brows which always denoted struggle with serious matters of sorts. She held a letter.

"From our solicitor, Mr. Keylock," she explained.

Jerry had visions of old debts or other old scandals of the real Montagu Trevider coming to light about which he realized he felt, or would feel, a peculiar responsibility.

"It's about your allowance, my dear," said Miss Fe-

licity. "It's all arranged. Sufficient stocks, bonds, and other securities have been made over to you—there are some papers here for us both to sign, which I can't make head or tail of. You will be assured an income of five hundred a year. But, since I have written Mr. Keylock, I've had misgivings about the amount. Of course you have no living expenses here, but I've wondered if five hundred is really enough."

Jerry stared. He was mentally translating pounds into dollars and gasping inwardly.

"You see, Monty, I don't want to seem niggardly—yet I don't want to encourage you in extravagance, but you mustn't feel you need curb any of your natural tastes for sport. If you want a new hunter, I'll pay for it. I have always said you came by your fondness for horses naturally. It's in the blood. My poor dear father had it—incurably. And as for the disposition to gamble—how could you help it, in face of the family history? That I've always said to myself and others. All I ask of you, dear, is to try to keep within the allowance for the present. If after six months you find it insufficient, come and tell me so frankly—only don't run into debt again and, above all things, don't borrow from outsiders. It's so humiliating to me, my dear."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Jerry, blushing with shame for the past sins of Montagu Trevider, exposed by the words of the gentle Miss Felicity. "Great guns, Aunt Felicity! what an infernal skunk——" He broke off abruptly just in time. "How can you love me—how can you put up with me at all if you think I could be capable of——"

"Ah, Monty, love isn't killed by such trifles as—well, indiscretions. Youth must have its fling—that is, male youth. And I believe you are sobered down into a sensible, well-balanced man—the Treviders always do, when they have been given time. The only

trouble was they wouldn't always give themselves time—there was your poor uncle, my dear brother Cecil.
..." Miss Felicity paused, and her eyes were filled with an old pain. She seemed to pull herself with effort back to the subject under hand. "I had the eyes of prophecy where you were concerned—even in the days when you were all nebulous. I could see you just as I believe you to be to-day—a solid man of fine character. I felt you were groping, experimenting, trying out your inherited traits—but I knew the hand of time would do its work satisfactorily, as it always has in the case of the men of our family. I never forgot you were a Trevider."

Jerry sighed, feeling bowed under the weight of Monty's iniquities of the past now transferred to his shoulders. "But five hundred pounds. . . . Why, Aunt Felicity, it's far too much. I can't think of taking it."

"My dear boy, how absurd. It will probably all be yours some day, unless—well, unless the very improbable happens, and there's no use going into that now.

. . . When I'm gone——''

"Don't," interrupted Jerry; "I can't bear the thought. Look here, Aunt Felicity, you mean an awful lot to me. I'll be hanged if I can think of life without you now—just after this short time—I mean since my return. Why, I'd rather have your respect, trust, and love than to own the whole county of Cornwall."

Miss Felicity beamed under the sincerity of Jerry's words and wished she had made the allowance a thousand a year. The estate could well afford it, and this new Monty was to be trusted. She rose, kissed him warmly, and handed him a cheque-book. "You need never show it me—spend it as you will, Monty. I have no misgivings."

Jerry held the cheque-book as though it were red hot and his fingers were scorched by the contact. His next crime must be to forge another man's name! His whole nature revolted at the thought. Yet he was ostensibly Monty Trevider. As Monty Trevider he ate food, wore clothes, accepted the service of Wiggs, for which Miss Felicity paid. To sign another man's name and thereby obtain money was, after all, ethically no worse than the sins which, by his silence, he daily committed against this dear innocent woman. "In for a penny in for a pound. . . ."

Miss Felicity watched the varying emotions warring on the battlefield of Jerry's face. She wondered what the trouble could be.

"I can't thank you, Aunt Felicity," stammered Jerry. "Your generosity and goodness just gets my goat. If you think I'm taking all this easily, you've got another think coming. I'd rather lick my weight in wild catamounts than sign one of these cheques. I feel my indebtedness to you is already so enormous that to take another farthing is just plain robbery."

"Now, Monty dear, you're surely not worrying about that thousand. Why, you silly boy! Don't you realize that has been more than covered by your unspent allowance, which has been accumulating during all the six years you've been away? It's not like you to worry over such trifles. It worries me. It shows you are still far from normal."

"Then Heaven forbid that I'll ever grow normal again," said Jerry, as with resignation he slipped the cheque-book into his pocket.

"I suppose the first cheque you'll draw will be for the ring—your engagement ring," said Miss Felicity, with a coquettish attempt at raillery. "I was going to suggest that you have several sent down from Plymouth for Celia's choice. Shall I order them for you? We have always dealt with Leek, Page, & Leek. My mother's engagement ring came from the old firm, and so I thought . . ."

"Yes, do please. It was good of you to remind me. But I leave so much to you, Aunt Felicity." Jerry felt like a hopeless fly in the spider's web.

"It will give me happiness to do this for you. It gives me quite a flutter to dabble in a romance. You see, I never had a romance of my own! I think that is why I enjoy others' so much. It is beautiful to think of you and Celia reunited after all these years. It's so like a love story—a Daily Mail feuilleton. And you are happy, Monty?"

"Bursting with joy!" cried Jerry as he rushed from the room and closed the door just in time to smother

his sardonic laugh of misery and shame.

CHAPTER XV

Just as he was about to ascend the stairs to his floor, Jerry became aware of an open door—the door of the room opposite Miss Felicity's morning or sitting room. He had never seen that door open before. He stopped and looked in. There was a soft radiance of blush filling the room. The sun filtered through rose silk curtains. A quaint little Elizabethan, dark oak, four-post bed was hung with the same warm rose silk. The upholstery of chairs and lounge was chintz, beflowered with pink rosebuds.

Jerry knew it to be the nest of Polly.

Alice, the housemaid, was within, brandishing a broom under the superintendence of Paynter.

Jerry heard his name mentioned. Said Paynter:

"He do be looking wisht. Seems to be in a bitter way about somethin'."

"P'r'aps 'is hurted head be troublin' of 'im," suggested Alice.

"P'r'aps," said Paynter. "But Miss Polly will be for makin' 'im forget 'e's got a head. Lay a fire, Alice. A bit o' flame will take the damp out. Miss Polly do be a chilly sort, 'ee knaws."

Paynter came out, and on seeing Jerry assumed a veneer of unflurried inconsequence. With a "Good morn', sir. Lovely day, sir," she disappeared into Miss Trevider's sanctum.

When Jerry reached his own room, Wiggs was nowhere to be seen. Not that he needed him, but somehow the place seemed incomplete without the hovering

of Wiggs. Evidently Wiggs had been diverted from his usual sphere of activity to lend a hand in the general domestic cataclysm of getting ready for Polly. Jerry's things were flung about the untidied room, giving it an abandoned air.

He cleared a chair, sat down, took up a day before's paper, and looked over the schedule of the sailings and arrivals of ships.

He had overheard Miss Felicity say something about the hour when the boat would get into Plymouth. If it was Plymouth, then Polly must be coming on the Dutch line. Yes, here was a boat touching at Plymouth this morning. Then Polly could catch the Riviera. She'd be at Tolvean by six that evening. . . . He looked at the blandly cherubic face of the mantel clock. Only ten now. . . . Eight hours to face. Eight hours to kill. It would be a long day.

Jerry restlessly started downstairs. As he passed through the house he felt the inadequately suppressed excitement permeating everything. In the hall he met Wiggs, hands holding flower-filled vases, which he was carrying toward the drawing-room.

"You weren't needing me, sir, were you?" inquired Wiggs guiltily, with an actual expression—the shame-faced look of one caught in unseemly employment.

"No," said Jerry, steadfastly ignoring the flowers. "I'm off for a walk."

That Wiggs would descend to the arrangement of flowers for the expected Polly told Jerry much of the evidently enslaving charms of that young lady.

He was the only one who hadn't a finger in that allabsorbing pie. He felt queerly lonely—an outsider.

He strayed aimlessly down past the fuchsia hedge to the rose garden. It was now mostly a stretch of bare thorny branches, with only here and there a bush bravely holding on to its summer dress of leaves. A glint of white under a thatch of deep green caught his eye. He stooped and found a large, beautiful white bud—the last rose of summer.

Jerry looked behind him. He glanced up toward the windows of the house. Then he took out his knife and, with the air of a boy doing something he is ashamed of, cut the stem and hastily slipped the rose into the capacious pocket of his coat.

He strolled about with deliberate aimlessness for some minutes, then retraced his steps toward the house. He went noiselessly through the deserted hall, slipped quietly up the stairs, and then stood at the top listening. Voices came to him from somewhere far below—the voices of Miss Felicity and Paynter in conference. Overhead he heard the footsteps of Wiggs. A broom in Alice's hands was swishing the carpet of the upper corridor. The coast was clear. The opportunity was his.

Softly turning the handle of the closed door facing him, the next moment found him within the sanctuary of Polly.

Jerry had never felt so shy in his life.

He restrained his eyes from any intimate investigation of his surroundings. His glance strayed only sufficiently for the purpose of the moment—the discovery of some receptacle for his offering on the shrine of Polly. There it was, on a diminutive desk, a slender lovely thing of silver and glass. He seized the vase and filled it from the ewer, running it over in his nervousness. With his handkerchief he mopped up the dark, tell-tale mess on the pink carpet; then with a serious air withdrew the bud from his pocket and replaced the now adorned vase on the desk.

Jerry told himself it was a silly performance—he was getting to be a perfect sissy—but he also realized

that this silly secret act had given him the first sensation of happiness he had experienced for days.

Like a conspirator he tiptoed to the door, listened, then stealthily made his exit. Once again in the hall, his air-starved lungs made him realize he had not breathed properly for several minutes; his heart beat like a rapid-fire gun, and his forehead was damp. With a leap he was up the stairs, down the corridor, and behind his own slammed door.

"Safe!" he ejaculated aloud, and turned to find Wiggs staring at him. Jerry realized he must have all the appearance of the pursued reaching cover. For the first time he felt abashed in the presence of Wiggs. With a short, nervous laugh he rushed over to the desk and began pawing things with the air of one who has misplaced something valuable.

Wiggs gave a sigh. It somehow infuriated Jerry. His nerves were raw. He turned on his servant and said sharply: "Can't you see I want to be alone?"

Wiggs withdrew with a murmured apology, which left Jerry plunged in the depths of humiliation. He had never before spoken rudely to a servant. He considered that the last word in ill-breeding. It was taking advantage of your position.

Quite miserable, Jerry tried to retrieve himself in his own eyes, to pull himself up to the level again, by cigarettes innumerable and a final tall Scotch.

He went down to lunch with a slight headache, but a fairly reinstated opinion of himself.

Miss Felicity could not disguise her inner state of perturbation. She left the table thrice to give suddenlythought-of orders to Paynter.

The afternoon dragged its leaden minutes interminably. Jerry began and discarded three books. Even Locke with *The Glory of Clementina Wing* could not hold his interest. He smoked more and more, and

again resorted to Scotch. Just as he had decided he now knew how intolerable eternity itself would be, when one had to face it, Jerry heard wheels on the gravel of the drive. Miss Felicity got in the carriage. She was evidently going to the station at Trewarthenith to meet Polly.

Jerry rang the bell.

"I'm going to dress for dinner," he announced to Wiggs, whom he had not seen since the curt dismissal of the forenoon.

Wiggs, ignoring the prematureness of the hour, set about getting studs and buttons into place.

Jerry felt he owed Wiggs especial consideration to make amends, but the harder he tried to be decent the nastier he became. He cut himself when he shaved, and blamed Wiggs. He declared the shirt prepared was too big in the neck. Wiggs did not argue. He got out another. Jerry discovered an infinitesimal bubble on the front and refused to wear it. The sleeves of the third were too long. He challenged Wiggs to dispute it. Wiggs left the statement uncontradicted and prepared a fourth. His patience won out. Jerry, seized with shame, accepted the fourth without inspection.

The toilet took longer than any he had ever made, and brought less satisfaction when completed. Jerry walked from the mirror of the dressing-table to the mirror of the wardrobe. He retied the bow at his neck. The ingenuous vanity of his behaviour did not occur to him. Just as Wiggs handed him a shaken-out handkerchief Jerry's ears caught the sound of wheels. His heart gave a leap. The carriage was stopping before the door. His impulse was to dash to the window. No. He'd play fair. He picked up a book and sat down to face another eternity and another cigarette.

He had just killed the stump when Wiggs re-entered

and solemnly announced, but with a suppressed tremor of voice, that Miss Trevider requested the master's presence in the drawing-room.

The hour had come—the hour toward which every moment of the day had crescendoed. Jerry rose. His legs felt queer and unstable. His heart was behaving ridiculously. All the blood in his body seemed to race to his face, then go in a cascading sort of waterfall down his spine. He actually had to touch the balustrade to steady himself as he descended the stairs.

Arrived in the great hall, he stood still to get himself more in grip, and also to taste to the last drop the wonder of that expectation-laden last moment before the actual realization.

Toward the door of the drawing-room he walked. He stopped midway in the door. With her back to the fire stood the original of the photograph—an original far lovelier than ever his imaginings had pictured.

A lightning communication passed from eye to eye. Jerry took a step forward as he heard himself involuntarily cry, "Polly!"

A low, joyous sound came from the girl's lips as, with fluttering arms, she flew to meet him. In another second her arms were about his neck and her face buried somewhere about where his heart was madly trying to burst from his body. She half sobbed, half laughed: "You knew me—you knew me! Oh, Monty darling, kiss me—kiss me a thousand times!"

She put both hands on his chest to push him off for another look in the eyes, then the arms flung themselves again upward, the hands interlaced behind, and she stretched herself to reach his mouth.

She kissed him.

To Jerry it was as if the world had been thrown out of its orbit. Planets seemed to be colliding in sidereal space.

He came to. His arms imprisoned her, as if he never again would lose her even for a second. He found her lips with the hungry eagerness that the dying-with-thirst might touch the life-saving water. He kissed her, forgetting all but the ecstasy of the contact. He forgot time—everything that would bring that rapture to an end.

He became conscious that the girl was struggling weakly, tremblingly, to disengage her lips and body. He suddenly realized that the savage vice of his arms must be hurting her. The arms dropped limply to his side and he stood quivering and pale, gazing into startled eyes.

The girl, too, was pale. In mid-kiss her feminine instinct had subtly recognized a strange hitherto unknown quality. The continuance of the kiss ought to have been a complete revelation, but it did not go beyond a troubling suggestion to senses which were too unprepared to cope with the emotions incontinently thrust upon them. Her blood thrilled affrightedly, warningly. She could not realize or name the thing which the kiss seemed to embody. It terrified. lacked all the sweet, warm comfort of the dear normal kiss of relationship; it held something overwhelmingly tremendous and inexplicable. Her cheeks grew hot, her head drooped. The next second she had turned with a nervous little laugh and was out of the room. Jerry turned too, and like a creature bereft of his senses fled after her. Near the top of the stairs he heard a door bang. He stood transfixed, staring at the door of Polly's room. He continued to stand as one in a trance for almost a minute, then with the sudden weakness of the old and infirm climbed the stairs.

In his own room he found Wiggs replacing discarded shirts in a drawer. He took his servant by the shoulders and turned him about.

"Wiggs, tell me—who is Miss Polly?"

"Why, your sister, to be sure, sir," responded Wiggs. "Good God!" said Jerry as he fell limply into the

nearest chair. And he'd kissed his "sister" like that.

With that kiss Jerry had come into the full knowledge of love—that transcendental emotion which is so much physical, so much spiritual, so pathetically human, so majestically divine.

CHAPTER XVI

In her own room sat Polly, still hatted, just as she had arrived from the station. Her hat sat at a drunken angle over the right ear, giving the girl a dishevelled look. She felt dishevelled. The unexpected violence of that kiss had put all her being awry.

Polly was still palpitant with the strange emotions engendered by Jerry's embrace. Of course, she argued, it was but the natural excitement and thrill of getting Monty back which made her feel so queer. The same conditions had made Monty behave so queerly, so immoderately. But there had been a strange lack of familiarity, yet a devastating sense of familiarity of another kind in his touch. What was it? she queried again. But, she reminded herself, he had recognized her instantly. He had called her name, the moment his eyes met hers. And Aunt Felicity had assured her that the fact of her coming had been kept a secret, that her name had not once been mentioned within his hearing. Of course it was all right. Of course he was her own, her very own dear Monty. But it was all so disconcertingly queer-everything connected with his return—now that one considered it calmly. . . . What proof was there? There was, of course, not a doubt about his appearance—Monty to the life, only older, more serious. Yet might not even the amazing resemblance be but some weird coincidence? One did hear of such things.

"Still he remembered me," sighed Polly. "That's proof, surely. Oh dear! why can't I be certain about

it all? . . . Aunt Felicity has no misgivings. And no one else, apparently, for she tells me Celia is again engaged to him. Of course it must be all right. He cried 'Polly' so joyfully. Nobody could have faked the surprise, the—the something wonderful of that cry. I feel a perfect dog to be suspicious. . . . It's just because I haven't seen him for so long. That's it. That's why he seems so like a-stranger. But the way he looked at me. . . . Monty never looked at me like that. His eyes seemed to burn clear through me—just as his kiss did. . . ." Polly's thoughts broke off in confusion. She rose and removed her hat. Again her thoughts brought her to a standstill. Aunt Felicity felt so sure. She had said that Monty was just the same lovable Monty, but so improved, so much more manly and fine. It was, of course, absurd to be doubting—it was despicable, disloyal. She ought to be revelling in the joy of having him again—above all, in the fact that he had remembered her. Why, if he'd done that, then it meant his memory was restored—everything else would come back to him and he'd be able to explain it all.

Her thoughts were now off on another tangent. She recalled that last ride she had had with Monty, the day before the heavens fell. It seemed so long, long ago. . . . With that memory she was flooded with the poignant recollection of all she had then suffered—the first awful grief, when days and days passed and no Monty returned. The torture had made her sixteen years feel sixty. Polly's heart melted with tenderness. She was a beast to have one doubt—an ingrate. However fraught with mystery the discovery of him in London by Aunt Felicity had been, it was a subject for heavenly happiness.

At that moment her roaming eye caught sight of the rose. She bent and whiffed it deeply. It somehow seemed to hold the combined scent of home and England. She stretched her arms over her head and thought how good it was to be home.

Outside the rooks were conversing noisily, as they settled down in the old ivy-covered tree near Polly's window, where, she remembered, they had always come at just this time of the evening ever since her first visit to Aunt Felicity, when she was a little girl.

A rap, and Alice entered to offer her services as temporary maid. Would Miss Polly dress for dinner? Miss Felicity had sent word not to bother to change if she felt too tired.

"No. I want to dress," said Polly, as she thought of this first dinner with Monty. It was an event and must be celebrated fittingly.

In half an hour, arrayed in the loveliest evening frock she possessed—a shrimp-pink crêpe de chine—and the white rose at her waist, she tripped down the stairs, all doubts banished from her mind.

Polly paused at the threshold of the drawing-room and took a long look at the remembered sweetness of the dear room, with its glowing heart of fire—its Cornish "bit o' flamme." There was the same gay chintz, mellowed and faded by its many launderings; there were the same familiar brasses and silver things, shining from their appointed places, and the air held the same remembered odour of violets. Oh! but it was good to get back to it all. It was so English, so alwayshad-been and so ever-would-be.

Polly had not stirred—only her eyes had wandered—and she thought herself alone. She was startled by hearing a deep, melancholy sigh. Then she saw the figure, hunched low and brooding in the great saddle-back chair before the fire.

Tiptoeing slyly across the thick carpet, she reached the back of the chair without its occupant realizing her nearness. She playfully put both hands over Jerry's eyes and whispered in his ear:

"Guess."

Jerry gave a momentary start, then answered:

"Polly! Of course it's you." He possessed himself of both her hands.

She leant over and kissed the thick, coarse, vigorous hair, then slid on to the arm of his chair. She turned his face to the light.

"Let me have a good long look at you, Monty, to be sure you are real, and not a make-believe—somebody who'll vanish again before my very eyes."

Jerry had never, even during the war, endured a more trying ordeal of nerves than that which he experienced during the good long look. It was impossible to take a good long look at Polly without going off his head again and wanting to smother her with kisses. He nervously diverted his eyes, then, as he laughed, and forced himself to look back into her eyes, said: "Very real. Pinch me and see."

"Old cat eyes!" she laughed fondly, as she nestled against him and entwined an arm about his neck. Of course it was her Monty. What a fool she'd been!

"Do you remember our old game of: 'Who' you love?'"

"No," acknowledged Jerry. "'Fraid I don't. Teach it to me again, won't you?"

"Oh dear, to think of your forgetting that! Well, I suppose I must begin. No, you begin. Ask me—but you must whisper it, of course—ask me whom I love." Jerry put his lips to her ear. Oh! damn it all! Here

Jerry put his lips to her ear. Oh! damn it all! Here he was stricken with fever again. He'd have to get the curb bit on. Here goes. "Who' you love?" he asked in a ridiculously tremulous whisper.

"Wiggs!" laughed Polly.

"O Lord!" said Jerry. "Surely not."

"Silly thing," cried Polly. Then she prompted in a stage whisper: "Ask me again."

"Whom do you really love?" queried Jerry, this time

safely, far from the maddening ear of Polly.

"Sir Wilfred!" declared Polly emphatically.

"I don't believe it," said Jerry indignantly. "Now I'll punish you—somehow, if you don't tell me quickly whom you really-and-truly, hope-to-die-cross-your-heart-and-spit, *love*."

Polly's other arm flew about his neck, and with her lips against his cheek whispered in the wee-est of whispers: "You."

Jerry felt paralysed. His forehead became damp. He felt himself the most miserable and the most blessed of men.

"Oh, you've forgotten the rest," said Polly. "Now you ought to kiss me—kiss me as many times as I have fibbed, and then cry: 'I knew it! I knew it!"

Jerry, with a sudden convulsive movement, tore her arms from his neck and jumped up.

"What is it?" asked Polly.

"I thought I heard Aunt Felicity calling me," lied Jerry. He listened, then said: "I was mistaken." He took out a cigarette and puffed violently, leaning on the mantel and staring down into the fire. Polly settled herself in the big chair.

"Do you realize, Monty, how far I've come to see you? I was in Charleston visiting an old schoolgirl friend when Aunt Felicity's cable came. I couldn't believe my eyes. . . . You see, darling, I had almost given up hope. It had been so long, and I was so tired just wondering what had become of you. Then I had got a horrible conviction that you'd been killed in the war—almost every one was.

"When I got the cable I just flung my clothes into the trunk and took the first train north, and—here I am, after surely the longest sea voyage ever taken since that of Columbus."

Jerry was thinking how heavenly it was to hear the soft, drawling tones of the south again. Polly had the characteristic southern difficulty with the letter "r," which changed floor into flo and door into dough. Her voice, and the exaggerated emphasis on adjectives, reminded him of his mother's.

"The American is the most adaptable creature on earth," said he abruptly, "but they can't change their tongues. Your voice, Polly—makes me homesick—makes me feel an exile. It makes me realize I am—shall always be at heart—only a Southerner—an alien in any other part of the globe except my own Dixieland."

Polly jumped up and gave him an impulsive hug. "I'm so glad you feel that way too, Monty, love. But we must never tell Aunt Felicity. She likes to think we are Americans only by an unfortunate accident of birth. We are, in her eyes, English by the grace of our two fathers—God and papa. And the funny part of it is, when I'm really in America I feel frightfully Englisha perfect British lioness. That's the awful difficulty of having an Anglo-American sandwich of a soul. Yet I know perfectly well if I marry an Englishman I shall perversely become all stars and stripes and behave with disgusting superiority on every Fourth of July. Confidentially, I hope—I intend to marry an Englishman. I love them. I even love them when I laugh at them. They're such well-bred souls. I do hope a special colony has been set aside for them in heaven. They'd be so unhappy having to associate with saved souls from countries that weren't English."

Jerry laughed. "Yet after all," said he, "we'll have to confess in our heart of hearts that we do realize that they are a damnably superior race. They've

graduated in things in which we are only in the freshman class. And look at the way we try to——"

"Hush!" said Polly. "Here comes Aunt Felicity."

Miss Felicity entered, attired in a black velvet gown of an indefinite style which might have belonged to any period of good art. Rare old discoloured lace rose and fell on her fluttering, modest bosom. She was so essentially the type of the gracious English gentlewoman; so intangibly the result of a well-bred, dignified occupation in the small trifles of life; a creature of meagre imagination, but a creature of flawless ideals. Beautiful ideals made for the beautiful manner. That Miss Felicity had ever had a childhood seemed incredible. That she had run, played, shrieked, and been punished seemed somehow inconceivable. One felt she must have been born fully dressed even to the gloves. Yet withal she was adorable, because she was so adorably human—human for all her old-worldness. She made one think of delightful, fairy-tale, out-of-date things, such as the Lord Mayor of London's coach.

As she entered, majestically for all her smallness, Jerry looked at her and wished from the bottom of his heart that a tie of blood might in reality have given him the right to call this dear human anachronism "Aunt."

Miss Trevider turned sparkling eyes upon him. "Monty dear, Polly tells me she has wrought the miracle—that the moment you saw her it all came back—you remembered."

A shadow passed over Jerry's face. He hated to take the joy out of those bright, happy eyes. "Yes," he replied, "I knew her, but——" he hesitated.

Aunt Felicity sensed the truth. Her face fell.

"Then it hasn't lifted—the cloud. All the rest is still dark?"

"Yes," said Jerry miserably.

"My poor boy!" cried Aunt Felicity.

"But that's something," said Polly, taking Aunt Felicity's hand and fondly rubbing her cheek against it.

"I'm just the opening wedge, don't you see, dearest? Through me everything else will come. Won't it, Monty?"

"Lord! I hope so," said Jerry fervently, as he offered an arm to each. They walked in thoughtful silence toward the dining-room.

CHAPTER XVII

JERRY was preoccupied throughout dinner with tumultuous thoughts produced by the vision of Polly sitting at his right.

She was so amazingly ornamental. And she was so radiant, one got the impression that somehow there was more light in the room. It was as if one had placed a great bowl of exquisite flowers on a hitherto undecorated table. She irresistibly made one think of flowers, not one, but a whole bouquet.

She was small, not much larger than the diminutive Aunt Felicity, yet such distinction had she, one had to look twice, mentally using a measuring rod, to realize her actual height. Her throat was beautifully long and slender, holding up the proud little head, in a fashion somehow suggesting masterly architecture. It made one think of things seen in cathedrals. It also made one think of a flower lifting its head up to the sun on a long, slender stem.

Her eyes—he was sure the extra light in the room came principally from those eyes. What colour were they? He had thought them sea-green during that "good long look" in the drawing-room, but they now seemed the blue of mid-ocean. She looked at him just then, and he was sure he detected a glint of gold in the blue, just the sort of gold that the sunset flings out on the waters of the sea. Now, he knew: they were chameleon. No, he didn't like that word. Opalescent was better. Glaucous! Where had he heard that

word? He didn't quite know what kind of eyes glaucous eyes were, but he was sure Polly had them.

Her profile fascinated him; it was so unrigid as to seem almost fluid. It had an ageless, deathless sort of childlikeness about it, a kind of Peter-Panness. And her hair did such funny, unexpected, twisty little things about the edges. It looked as if it would behave like a baby's fingers—entwine itself about anything put within reach. The colour of the hair was the black of Japan, but a black warmed and curled in an Italian sun.

Her hands intrigued him. They were proportioned to her smallness, yet the fingers were so long and tapering as to give a deceptive size to the whole, and the hands looked so strong, so capable, so expressive. She used them as a Latin might. She talked with them.

Jerry was stung into attention once in a while by some amusing description of Polly's of her fellow-voyagers, or by a question addressed directly to him.

His wine-glass had been filled three times, but so abstracted had he been, he had not observed the fact. He thirstily drank the glassful down, without pausing to sip.

When Aunt Felicity and Polly withdrew, Jerry pushed aside the port offered by the butler. He wanted something stronger, something that would "bring the answer."

He got up and fetched a bottle of whisky and a siphon from the sideboard.

Lighting a cigarette, he sat with feet sprawled out, and drank with a peculiar mechanical precision, about a swallow to every third second. He was not really cognizant of a drop entering his mouth.

He announced to himself that he had reached the limit of endurance in this infernal masquerade. Polly and Polly's touch had brought things to an inevitable climax. Her apparently unsuspecting acceptance of him as her brother, her tender demonstrativeness, made him realize more than ever the outrageousness of the deception. The twinges of conscience he had experienced in the face of Aunt Felicity's faith, affection, and kindness had been painful enough at times, but he had been able to cope with them, hammer his conscience into insensibility, but with Polly it was a different matter. How could he permit her to give him her adorable, adoring love, to have her put her arms about his neck, to kiss him morning and night—and probably noon too? (Jerry subconsciously realized his glass needed refilling. He mechanically attended to it.) It was unthinkable. It would be a crime to be fittingly punished only by death—"Hung by the neck till dead," he said aloud in a queer, unfamiliar voice.

He nervously got up and automatically emptied the glass, refilling it immediately, mostly missing the target aimed at with the siphon. "Behaves like a dam' Charlie Chaplin squirter," he commented audibly.

No! By George! He'd not keep up this fool business another second. He'd get it off his chest and stand again a decent, honest, clean man, before women and children—no, he didn't quite mean that—he meant before men and God. No, God ought to come first. Of course that was what he'd meant to say. God and men. God and men. . . . Well, what of God and men? Jerry heard a loud laugh. He turned quickly with an ultra-sensitive fury and resentment, prepared to annihilate any one who dared laugh at a man, who was simply trying to do the-well, do something or other that was fine and noble. He had a sense of the intention, though he couldn't quite grasp what it was to lead up to. He looked about with blazing eyes. He couldn't see the mocker, but he knew. . . . With some difficulty, by stepping high over the large objects in the design of the carpet, he reached the leather screen before the door leading into the butler's pantry. There was no-body lurking there! Jerry stared as one at a spiritual-istic séance. Then he realized he was alone. Had he laughed? Had he had the effrontery to laugh? "You think it's a laughing matter, do you, you son of a beach-comber, to deceive a young, innocent girl?" He was addressing his own reflection in a mirror, his face purple with rage. "I'll show you." He managed to navigate the undulations of the waves of the carpet, and, by a sort of dive, grip the deep-sea-going table.

By strategy he also managed to clutch an elusive glass and got two big gulps down. He grew calmer. What was it he was saying? Well, it didn't matter, but one thing was certain, he'd not keep this infernal bluff up any longer. He'd behaved like a cursed Hun to Miss Felicity, and to Celia, too, but he'd be damned if he'd behave like a ruddy blighter to Polly-the finest girl that ever set foot on English shores. . . . That sounded rather silly, somehow, and the moment he was approaching demanded good hard sense and dignity. He drew himself up and assumed what he considered the air of dignity. He would wait no longer. He'd go now. He'd walk straight into the drawing-room and announce to that noble woman, Miss Trevider, that he was a pretender, that he was a-golly! what was that word? It was a hell of a good word if one could land it. . . . Impersonator, by gum! . . . He, Jerrold Emerson Middleton, was an impersonator. He wasn't Monty Trevider any more than he was Epictetus. Jerry found great difficulty with that name. "Epictetus." He said it aloud carefully and slowly as one rehearsing, but it persisted in sounding like Eb-bucde-tus.

He was standing swaying beside the table, viewing his empty glass sadly, knowing there was something it needed to make it look complete but not being able to quite think what one did to an empty glass, and repeating slowly and painstakingly, "Ebbucdetus," when the door opened, without his perceiving it.

Miss Felicity, who had grown alarmed at Jerry's long delay in joining them, stood as if struck to stone, as she saw her supposed nephew's difficulties with equilibrium and heard that strange, unknown word, "Ebbucdetus" issuing from his lips.

Jerry, who suddenly seemed subconsciously to realize that eyes were upon him, turned violently, nearly upsetting everything in the unstable room, including himself.

With the assistance of two hands on the table he reinstated his legs to the perpendicular and took on

an air of great pompousness. He explained:

"I'm all right—perfectly all right. You don't think so. That's where you're all wrong. You must correct that notion before I can talk to you, because you've go to realize I'm sensible in order to take what I'm about to say seriously. If you think I'm a hot-air artist you've got another think coming. I'm a desperate man, who is perfectly sober—dead sober." Jerry paused for sheer need of breath.

Miss Felicity listened quietly, though her heart was thumping miserably.

"Of course you are all right, dear, but it's late, and—" The poor little lady found it so difficult to prevaricate, even about so trifling a thing as time. "Don't you think you had better go to bed? I'll call Wiggs."

"No, don't call anybody," cried Jerry. "We need privacy," he whispered. "This thing is just between us. It's got to be said now. You think I can't talk.
..." It did seem an enormously difficult and painful task. "Why, I can say mul-li-ga-taw-ny, pufficly, and you'll confess that's *some* word. I could say that thing

quickly about 'The Leith police dith-mitheth-us,' if I wanted to, but I always hated people who show off. What's the use of throwing the bull now? What you and I want is plain, honest, simple play-ball. What I want to say to you as man to man, Aunt Felicity—I mean Miss Trevider—what I want to say is, I'm no more Ebbucdetus than I'm—no, that's not it, I mean . . . Oh, dam' it all! I've behaved to you like a Chinese dog. I've tricked you, tricked Celia, but, by God! I won't trick Polly. I'm going to be clean—white as the Arctic snows, in her eyes. . . ."

Jerry looked up to drive his point home, to find he was addressing a closed door. But was he to be balked? No, by Heaven, he'd say it now if he had to hunt the whole house and the roof over for Miss Felicity. . . .

He let go the only friend he had in the world—the table—and started forth in that awful world of undulations, alone and unsupported. The going was bad. It was a rolling sea, and the deck was aslant in both directions at once. He believed it was zigzagging—this damned house-boat—avoiding a submarine, probably. . . .

Perseverance, though, always won out. It would even bring you to a door if you used enough of it. A handle, too, could be caught hold of, small though it was, and sly as it undoubtedly was, if you just kept on using perseverance. He got the door handle, turned it round, and fell backward as the door opened. An arm shot forward through the door and rescued him from certain death. He looked up to discover the identity of the life-saver and recognized Wiggs.

"Hello, old Scout!" cried Jerry delightedly.

"Good evening, sir," replied Wiggs imperturbably.

"Stormy night, Wiggs," said Jerry, shaking his head lugubriously.

"Indeed, sir! I believe you rang for me. I presume you'd like to go to bed. Shall we go up now, sir?" "I didn't ring for you. Whoever said so lied. Don't

"I didn't ring for you. Whoever said so lied. Don't you let yourself be taken in like that, Wiggs. What I want is my aunt. I mean Miss Trewider. I've got to see her on a very important matter at once."

"Wouldn't it be better for you to wait until morning, sir?" suggested the servant. "You see, the fact is, Miss Trevider is not—not feeling very well, and I think she has probably gone to bed."

"In that case," said Jerry grandiloquently, "I wouldn't disturb her for the world! Miss Polly will do just as well. I'll see her."

Wiggs by this time had tactfully got an arm about the form of his master, and was surreptitiously leading him in the direction of the stairs.

"Very well, sir. Come up to your room and I will then carry a message to Miss Polly. She will come to you."

Jerry by this time felt an overwhelming gratitude toward any one who could solve things for him—especially toward any mariner capable of steering him through the heaving hall. Walking was such a tiresome, useless performance with only two legs. One ought to be a centipede on nights like this.

"I think I'll sit down and rest," he announced as he slithered through Wiggs's grasp and came down with a bump on the bottom step of the stairs.

Wiggs, however, was cruelly merciless. He was all for action. Wiggs must have once been the strong man in Barnum's circus. He could lift one just as *ee*-asy. But it was one thing to be lifted and another for Wiggs to make one's legs climb. His legs were going to rest, however wobbly and unsatisfactory the inaction. But no. Wiggs seemed even to force them to movements upward. Jerry thought of several dignified protests

he wanted to make, but they scarcely seemed worth the trouble of enunciation. He felt so dead tired. Even his tongue was tired and limp.

After all, why not lean on Wiggs? If Wiggs liked it, if it gave Wiggs pleasure, certainly lean, lean hard. Let Wiggs enjoy himself, and do with one as he chose. Wiggs chose to pull and heave him up to the third floor to his own room. Wiggs chose to undress him as if he were a child, and Wiggs chose almost to pick him up and lay him on his bed. Funny thing what some people enjoy doing! It was a joke. . . . But back of the joke what was that cursed thing he'd been worrying about? Oh yes. It was his deception of Miss Felicity and Polly.

"Wiggs, I'm a putrid Hun!" Jerry announced almost proudly. "The sooner Miss Trewider knows I'm a dud the better off she, I, everybody'll be. I'm sick of the whole dam' show. I'm going to clear the decks and then skiddoo to-morrow."

"I wouldn't distress myself about it to-night, sir," said Wiggs. "Wait till to-morrow. Just go to sleep, if you can, now."

"But before going to sleep, I want to impress on your mind the fact that a scarecrow is a man compared to me, but mind my word—I'll tell the world I'm going to"—Jerry's voice grew fainter and he whispered weakly—"clean house and then vamoose." His mouth remained in the position of "moose," and a deep—overdeep—breathing followed.

Wiggs sat down on a chair beside the bed. He was tired. When he knew his master was sound asleep, he did a queer thing: he leaned over and gently stroked the back of the hand which hung weakly over the edge of the bed. It was the action of a dog trying to express its dumb affection and distress by licking its master's hand.

Downstairs in the drawing-room Miss Felicity was

softly weeping on Polly's breast.

"But I assure you, Polly," she sobbed, "it's the first time—the very first. He hasn't taken a drop too much since he came back, until——"

"Yes, dearest. I'm sure of it," comforted Polly.

"It's just the excitement, the overjoy of your return, that made the poor boy drink more than he realized. He's been so straight, so dependable, so quiet——"

"Yes, dearest," said Polly, patting her aunt's back. "Don't worry. He'll be as right as rain in the morning and frightfully ashamed of himself. We mustn't rub it in. We'll pretend nothing has happened, won't we?"

"Certainly—certainly," wept Miss Felicity. "But I'm so afraid his poor brain is giving way again. . . . He told me he wasn't Epictetus! Oh dear! . . ."

Polly laughed outright, but quickly subsided as she responded to a gentle rap on the door.

Wiggs entered.

"Begging your pardon for intruding, Miss Trevider. I've just come to say Mr. Trevider is sleeping quietly, and—and—"

"Yes, Wiggs," encouraged Miss Trevider.

"I just wanted to say, ma'am, that I feel sure the master has not been well all day—that he's been in a very queer state of mind and quite excitable. He thought he was being chased this morning, ran up the stairs and into his room, slammed the door, and, quite out of breath, said, 'Safe!' Then he was not at all his natural self when dressing for dinner. So, ma'am, I can only think his physical and mental condition was entirely responsible for the unfortunate—I mean peculiar effect the small amount of spirits he took to-night had upon him. I don't want to be seeming to take liberties, Miss Trevider, but I would suggest that per-

haps you would better get the doctor to have a look in to-morrow. Mr. Trevider seems a bit rambling in his mind. He apparently thinks he is a German, and I regret to say he has said something about cleaning up things, after which he said he intended to 'vamoose,' which I take it in American means to leave."

"Dear!" cried Miss Felicity. "Thank you, Wiggs, thank you very much. You may go now."

As the door closed behind Wiggs, Miss Felicity and Polly stared into each other's white faces.

"Oh, Polly, do you think he's going to disappear again?"

"We'll see that he doesn't," said Polly. "Wiggs is quite right. The doctor will come to-morrow, and we'll keep him safely in bed, with Wiggs as gaoler, until this fit passes. Wiggs will just lock up all his clothes—he can't very well 'vamoose' nude, can he? Now, dearest, we'll go sensibly to bed and to sleep. Put everything out of your mind. After all, this evening's performance is the most characteristic thing he's done, apparently, since he came back. There's no doubt it's Monty—the same old lovable, weak Monty."

Then abruptly Polly laughed.

"Not Epictetus!"

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Jerry awoke the next morning—at 9.10, to be exact—he seemed to be trying to grope through some horrible sooty fog. He felt as one feels on awakening the morning after the death of some dear one. In fact, he suspected he was the dear, dead one himself. It was better, after all, to be dead. To be alive, to have to think, would kill one anyway. He shrank from something—what was it? Some sort of reckoning—a reckoning with himself. Nobody had taught him in Sunday school that one had to face a reckoning with oneself after death. That was worse than being arraigned before the Judgment Seat. One would naturally be on the defence there—one always was in dock of any kind, but there was no dodging before the arraignment of oneself by oneself. One knew all about the case, and cleverness in denials wouldn't convince oneself. Oblivion was what he craved. He didn't want any hereafter. He just wanted to sleep through all eternity. What a wonderful thing sleep was-always had been, even in life. It was the drop-curtain to all earthly sorrows. After all, his happiest hours on earth had been those spent in sleep. It had been his friend since childhood. It had befriended him during all those hideous experiences in France. And now all he asked for was the last great sleep that would know no waking even at the Last Trump. No Reveille for him! What he wanted was a final Celestial Taps.

Jerry's eyes felt eternally closed—sealed. They were so heavy he couldn't have opened them if he had

wanted to. He could sleep if only that disgustingly annoying, accusing *something* would stop rap, rapping at the door of his consciousness. He'd keep it out. It could wait.

A thud of something falling made him leap about two feet. He opened leaden eyes to see a shamefaced Wiggs picking up a book knocked by accident from the table.

"What has happened?" cried Jerry wildly. "Is this the end of the world?"

"No, sir," said Wiggs. "It's only the end of a night." Jerry became aware of an agonizing thirst. "Bring me a glass of water. Bring two glasses."

Wiggs brought them.

"Why does my tongue feel as if it had been mistaken for a street and asphalted?" asked Jerry.

"State of the stomach perhaps, sir."

"Why does my mouth taste as if I had cleaned out the Augean stables with my teeth?"

"Can't say, sir."

"And why does it seem as if my head was a skyscraper in course of construction, and the steam drill going at top speed in the back of my neck?"

"Don't know, sir—never having had the chance to see a skyscraper."

"I feel like hell!" Jerry summed up succinctly.

He was raised on one elbow, the second empty glass in his hand. It suddenly dropped from his grasp, rolled off the bed, and shivered to bits on the floor. Jerry had remembered. That is, he remembered some horrible bits, but the fiendish part of it was, he couldn't remember all—couldn't remember the really vital parts—couldn't remember just how much he had told.

Then a still more horrible, humiliating realization came with a bang. He'd been drunk!

Drunk! and Polly knew it.

Jerry clapped both hands over his eyes and wished a comet would strike the earth.

Wiggs was discreetly leaving the room. Jerry heard his cat-like movements and shouted, "Come back!"

He fell exhausted on the pillow and said:

"Now tell me, without mincing matters, just how many variations of an ass I made of myself."

Wiggs was silent—reverentially silent.

"Don't stand there like a frozen polar bear. Spit it out. What did I do? What have I said?"

"I will remind you, sir," began Wiggs, trying to get at rudiments, "that you were not at all well all day yesterday. You were decidedly not yourself when dressing for dinner. Your nervous, excited condition left you, I fear, a prey to stimulants, sir, with the unfortunate result that the wine taken at dinner rather went to your head."

"Get on with it!" snapped Jerry irritably, "and don't mess about with the genealogy of my affliction. Get down to essentials. What did I tell—that is, say?"

"Very little of any importance or relating to facts. You said, begging your pardon for repeating it, you said you were a putrid Hun."

"Wiggs, can you lift your right hand and swear to me before tall heaven that I said nothing more than that?"

Wiggs extended his right hand up beside his right ear and declared that was all he had heard him say before he had quietly dropped off to sleep.

"But," thought Jerry, "Heaven only knows what I said to Aunt Felicity."

He now found he hoped to God he'd said nothing. He realized he could have been in no fit condition to say what he meant to say, what of course ought—must at some time be said. The confession he had to make required a soberness of the most exaggerated order.

Then a curiously illuminating and staggering realization came to Jerry. Miss Felicity was completely lacking in imagination! Granting that fact one must acknowledge that Miss Felicity could never have grasped the truth even had he told it last night. Could she ever grasp it? Could she conceive of any one doing the bizarre thing Jerry had done when he had planned and executed his "Solution"? Aunt Felicity had no imagination to bring to bear on the thing; she'd never understand it, she'd never believe it. . . .

It would be hopeless to attempt to tell her the truth. . . .

The dear lady would be only convinced that her supposed nephew was incurably mad.

Jerry felt himself grow weak before that incontrovertible conviction. Escape would not lie in confession. He had gambled with Fate, not knowing the cards were stacked. Fate held five aces.

He had been playing only for small stakes, a few square meals, and a lodging for a time—and look at what he'd had forced upon him-look at it! And how many more hell-begotten stunts was he to be put through? He'd heard something about a Bergson theory that Nature, the experimentalist, sometimes seemed to select certain specimens of the human race to play with scientifically—put them through every doggone thing she could think of, subjected them to every test, forced every conceivable experience upon them, and didn't give a hang whether the subject of the experiment bent or broke under the thing. No; Nature—Fate didn't give a dam' for the destiny of the individual. She, he, was all for experiment, results, theory, knowledge. Let the poor devil go under! It was only another dog vivisected for the good of the race.

Well, he, Jerry Middleton, was the star victim of his

age. He was the exemplification of the Bergson theory. He was the plaything of Nature, le pantin of Fate.

Another idea, revelation, came to him. He was being punished for a crime—the worst form of suicide. He had dared to commit the suicide of personality!

Sweat stood in beads on his forehead. The palms of

his hands wept.

Wiggs appeared before him as a phantom. He held an envelope in his hand.

Jerry hadn't got a letter for so long, the sight of one extended toward him gave him a shock. It also gave him the exquisite sense of having got something back—the re-establishment of rights, connected with individuality. He hadn't before realized how he'd longed for a letter, missed letters, until he saw that letter in Wiggs's hand.

He took it eagerly. The envelope was addressed only to "Monty." He wondered if it might be from Celia. He'd not seen her since their walk.

He opened it and read:

"Monty—darling,—I know you'll wake up feeling like the Old Boy with Gen. R. E. Morse in supreme command, so I'm sending this little message, together with my love, to say cheer up—all is not lost.

"Aunt Felicity adores you still, and, frankly, we're decided you seem much more like your old self to us both after last night's performance. I'm horribly sorry for you, precious, 'cause I know you'll feel like a perfect beast, but honestly you were only humorous—which was a distinct improvement over your dullness at dinner. So I say again, cheer up, old dear, and just stay put where you are for a time.

"I'll run up to see you when Wiggs reports all re-

pairs have been effected.—Your loving

"Pollywog."

Jerry blushed like a boy receiving his first love letter. "Your loving" . . . The joy produced by the letter was not in the least diminished by the fact that he knew it to be written to another—to Monty Trevider. Jerry basked in the comfort of it with a childlike ingenuousness. It had been the flood of sunlight scattering the sooty fog enveloping him.

With a rush, all the longing, desire, anguished desire, inspired by Polly the night before, returned.

He realized, from her note, that he had not confessed to Aunt Felicity. A great sigh of relief escaped him. It was the sigh of the condemned criminal on hearing of reprieve. . . .

Jerry's reprieve meant he could be with Polly a little while longer—until Fate got wearied of her experiments and opened the door of escape.

He began to reread the letter and was deaf and blind to all else. He did not hear the door open. He did not hear footsteps approaching the bed.

With a start he suddenly looked up into the eyes of a stranger, who was staring down at him with a curiously professional concentration. "Dr. Baragwaneth," explained Wiggs.

Jerry's impulse was to run, to escape. He didn't like doctors. He distrusted them. He especially wished to avoid all penetrating, scientific gentlemen. . . . By an adroit movement he could leap past the doctor and get into the bathroom. A bathroom was always sanctuary. It was the only spot on this earth where you could be safely alone with your Maker.

Jerry got tensely ready for the spring.

The doctor placed fingers upon his wrist and methodically took out a watch.

His chance had passed. Jerry closed his eyes and said to himself, "Hell!"

CHAPTER XIX

DR. BARAGWANETH did not talk much to Jerry. He did not need to. Miss Trevider had talked to him over

the telephone, and later on in the drawing-room.

The doctor knew most of the family history. of course, knew all about the departure of Monty Trevider from the family fold six years previously. He had read the account in The Daily Mail of "The Man with Lost Memory." He'd been keenly interested in that case; such cases always interested him, for he had theories about the treatment of such an affliction, a theory he had longed to test out. He had felt much slighted that he had not been consulted earlier by Miss Trevider.

It seemed from what Miss Trevider had just told him there was a threat of another disappearance. Humph!

Dr. Baragwaneth had come prepared to try an experiment. The experiment would have two purposes in view: primarily and eventually a restoration of memory; secondarily a probing of the subconscious memory. This latter procedure must take precedence in the matter of experiment over the main object aimed at. He was perfectly sure of his ground, from experience, where the subconsciousness was concerned. The other—the complete restoration of memory—was hypothetical. If this result was attained, it would be a great discovery. He mentally saw himself reporting the case before the next meeting of the British Medical Association. He visualized requests from The Lancet and The British Medical Journal for monographs on the subject. His fancy even went recklessly so far as to fabricate a possible royal loss of memory, the cure of which would be wrought by him. The result—the reward—he could see it at the top of his report on that to-be famous case—"Sir Bernard Baragwaneth."

It might also procure for him the opportunity, long dreamed of—experimentation on the subconsciousness of those arrested for suspected crimes.

His manner took on a certain pompous jauntiness. He was feeling his future knightly oats.

He opened his bag and took out a case.

He walked over to the bed.

"Tongue. Let me see your tongue."

Jerry stuck out his tongue, looking as if he were really doing what he wanted to do—make a face at the doctor.

"Filthy!" pronounced Dr. Baragwaneth. "Had any breakfast?"

Jerry looked as if he were going to be actively sick. The mere word breakfast made him writhe inwardly. "Lord, no!" he snarled.

"Good," said the doctor and retired to the bath-room.

What the deuce was the old owl going to do to him? Jerry wished he'd talk instead of looking so all-fired wise.

The old owl was at that moment taking a small bottle containing tablets out of his case. It was labelled 1/100th grain hyoscine and 1/6th grain morphine. He dissolved a tablet in sterile water and filled his hypodermic.

"This will get him off to sleep quickly," thought he.
"In about two hours I'll use two-hundredths of a grain of hyoscine alone. These two doses ought to keep him

going till after lunch. By that time the conscious memory will be in complete abeyance. The perception will be gone. Apperception will be unaffected. Facts will—or ought to be—delivered by the subconscious brain."

He returned to the bedside. He didn't ask Jerry to do anything. He didn't believe in asking patients. He pulled down the bedclothes, pushed Jerry unceremoniously over on his side, loosened his pyjamas, and before Jerry could imagine what the "dodge" was, felt a needle plunge into his thigh. He softly and futilely swore. The doctor withdrew the needle, wiped the spot with antiseptic cotton-wool, and yanked the bedclothes back into place.

"Make yourself comfortable," said he.

"The infernal cheek of him!" thought Jerry. "As if I could make myself comfortable this morning!"

Jerry kept his eye on the doctor. The old bird was now pulling down the shades. The resultant crepuscular light of the room was a relief to eyes which felt full of red pepper. The doctor went out. Jerry looked about for Wiggs. He, too, had disappeared. Jerry was alone—alone in an abominable world. Then the world began to grow imperceptibly less horrible. It became a world to which Jerry felt singularly indifferent. It was a restfully quiet world, blessedly free from sound. His troubles seemed to be slipping away from him, he couldn't worry, hard as he tried. Things didn't apparently matter so much as he'd thought. The doctor was right. The sensible thing was to make oneself comfortable. He turned over and relaxed through his whole body. He felt as carefree as a piece of old cork bobbing out on a wave. He liked that simile. He became more and more the old cork. He bobbed up and down, leaving the responsibility to the wave—a nice soothing wave, which felt curiously like a cradle. He was drifting out on the tide. He drifted into sleep.

Dr. Baragwaneth left instructions with Miss Felicity as to where he could be reached by telephone, if he should be needed within the two hours. He ordered Wiggs to sit quietly beside his master, not to converse with him, nor answer questions, should the patient awake, but to give him water if he complained of thirst.

He then got in behind his old nag and set forth on his country visits, a boyish smile wreathing his usually stern countenance. He was mentally forestalling the phenomena which would develop. His state of mind was very much like that of the hunter setting forth for a day of sport.

Nothing is so alluring to the medical mind as wandering into the bypaths of experimentation, especially bypaths which, so far as one knew, were virginal. This particular bypath, which Dr. Baragwaneth intended to explore, might lead eventually to a very remarkable high road. . . .

By putting the patient into the peculiar hypnotic sleep induced by this combination—so frequently used by alienists—he would get a condition in which the associative bridges in the brain would, for the most part, be temporarily broken down; there would be a consequent disarrangement of memory—conscious memory. The door of the storehouse of memory—so to speak—would be closed and would refuse to open to any fresh stimuli, new impressions. There would consequently be no recoverable record in the patient's mind of anything that had taken place while he had been under the spell of the drugs.

But—and here was the basis of his theory—the memory of all matters stored in the brain prior to the

establishment of this peculiar state of seminarcosis would be unaffected. Dr. Baragwaneth's intention was to tap this storehouse of memory. He'd get at facts, and the patient on awakening would recall nothing of what he had told. Yet at the same time he hoped that this stirring up of the dormant subconsciousness—dormant since the loss of memory—would result in a sustained subconscious wakefulness after consciousness was re-established.

When the doctor returned he found his patient sleeping quietly. "Pulse normal, slight flushing, a little dilation of the pupils," he commented to himself, "but no excitement, flesh cool and moist, everything going well."

He prepared his second injection and administered it. Jerry winced and sleepily muttered something.

The doctor instructed Wiggs to watch while he went below for lunch with Miss Trevider; if the patient showed a tendency to ramble in his sleep or attempted to get out of bed, he was to be called.

The doctor ate his lunch with deliberation, and read a Plymouth paper, of the day before, with his cigar; then, rubbing his hands together with the boyish smile of expectation, proceeded puffingly to climb the two flights of stairs.

The patient was in an ideal condition—just the proper state for his experiment.

"Of course," the doctor warned himself, "the statements of patients during this state of artificial sleep are in rare instances unreliable. One has to take account of the idiosyncrasy of the patient." He recalled the case of a woman of irreproachable character, and meagre opportunities, who had laid proud claim to a lover—denoting perhaps an inherent amorousness and tendency to intrigue, entirely unsuspected, even by herself, during her normal state.

The doctor's eyes having accustomed themselves to the dusk of the room, he drew a chair up to the bedside, took out a small notebook and fountain pen.

He felt Jerry's pulse, then shaking his arm slightly

said loudly: "Mr. Trevider!"

Jerry opened his eyes instantly.

In a very gentle voice the doctor then began his cross-examination. Solely with a desire to find out if the patient was responsive, he inquired:

"What is your name?"

"Jerrold Emerson Middleton," was the astounding

reply.

The doctor was nonplussed for the moment. He reminded himself that one must be prepared to take into account the varying reaction of patients to the drugs. This patient was evidently attaching to himself some name he had heard or read—some name retained by the brain. He would vary his question.

"Can you spell your name?"

Jerry slowly and painstakingly spelt it.

"Puzzling, but most interesting," mused the doctor, as he wrote in his little book.

"He'd try another method of interrogation.

"Where were you born?"

"Ninety-six," replied Jerry.

"He probably thought I asked for a telephone number," concluded the doctor. He ascribed the absurdity of the reply to incoherence possibly due to a slight over-dosage. In transcribing the reply he made note to this effect.

"Where were you before you went to London?"

"France."

"What did you do in London?"

"Nothing."

"Do you recall what you did just before being taken to the police-station?"

"Sure," replied Jerry.

"What?"

"Walked out into Euston Road and stood there."

"Why did you do that?"

"Down and out."

"Humph!" mused the doctor. "Not getting forward fast, but it may all lead to something."

"Did you have a blow on the head?"

"Nobody crowned me!" said Jerry.

The doctor looked worried. This sounded like dementia. Did this youth imagine himself a pretender to a throne?

"Have you anything on your mind—is there anything worrying you?"

"Lord!" sighed Jerry. "I should smile!"

"Could you tell me what it is?"

"Nope," said Jerry very emphatically.

"This is all very maddening and disappointing," thought the doctor. Apparently even the subconsciousness was now on guard. The patient was beginning to look too much awake. He didn't want him restored to consciousness yet. He'd desist for the present. Jerry was moving his hands about restlessly. He tried to get up. The doctor commanded: "Lie down!" and Jerry obeyed like a lamb. The doctor administered another small injection of 1/400th grain hyoscine, and then sat quietly watching the patient doze off.

After a time he pulled the bell cord for Wiggs and left the servant in charge, while he sped off to see a few more patients.

After five he returned and roused the patient, administering a cup of tea and encouraging him to eat two slices of bread and butter. Wiggs stood by wide-eyed. He'd been told to bring the tea, but not to speak to his master, as the doctor said he didn't want Mr. Trevider roused to actual consciousness. Actual con-

sciousness! How could a man sit up in bed and chew and swallow, without actual consciousness? Wiggs felt he was a party to some unholy sort of witchcraft. He wished he'd not suggested sending for the doctor.

The tea and bread finished, the doctor ordered the patient to lie down and go to sleep, and by all that was queer, thought Wiggs, the master did-did just what he was told to do! It wasn't natural. . .

After dinner the doctor reappeared, dismissed Wiggs, and sat down for another catechism.

Jerry, on again being slightly roused, persisted in declaring himself Jerrold Emerson Middleton of Ninety-Six. There was no making him recall the fact that he was really Montagu Trevider.

"Baffling, very baffling!" commented Dr. Baragwaneth.

"Mother living?" he asked.

"No. Dead."

"Straight on that matter at least," thought the doctor.

"Father living?"

"No, dead," said Jerry, then added with a sardonic smile, "Cat's dead too."

The doctor gave a start. This was irrelevancy—nonsense.

"What are you called?" he asked.

"Monty Trevider," Jerry replied, with a wry face.

The doctor accepted this one small success in a long list of failures.

He had apparently failed so utterly to elicit truth, he decided to abandon further effort.

In thinking the matter over he decided that Middleton was undoubtedly the name adopted by young Trevider on leaving home. He naturally would not have used his real name. The brain—the subconscious brain had, however, retained the memory of the assumed name used for six years. The action of the drugs had caused the brain to give it forth. Interesting, very interesting. He would think the whole matter over carefully, saying nothing to Miss Trevider until he had made his conclusions. Besides, the experiment was as yet incomplete. There was the great secondary, or really primary result aimed at—a complete restoration of memory. He'd give one more injection, just to insure a good night's sound, unbroken sleep; give the brain a complete rest for twenty-four hours, and then we'd see where we were. He believed the patient would awake in the morning refreshed in body and mind, with a brain cleared of memory mists.

In the downstairs hall he remarked cryptically to Miss Trevider:

"We may get wonderful results—by morning. I'll look in then. He's quite all right for the night. He'll have a good night's unbroken sleep and wake in a fine state of well-being, and, I hope, to find himself a perfectly restored, normal man—in every way—in every way, Miss Trevider."

"Do you mean that you have restored his-"

"We won't forestall the hatching of the eggs," said the doctor. "We'll wait for the morning—time enough to count our chickens then." With a gay wave of the hand and a twinkle of the eye he was off.

CHAPTER XX

THE next morning Jerry awoke at eight-thirty. He sat up in bed feeling peculiarly fit and pleased with himself.

He glanced about the room. To his amazement he saw Wiggs, fully dressed, asleep on the couch. What did it mean? Had he, Jerry, been ill? No, it couldn't be that. He had never felt better. O Lord! Now he remembered—he'd been drunk. Of course, that faithful ass of a Wiggs had stationed himself there to watch over his master. Poor fellow! He looked tired. Sleep wasn't altogether becoming to Wiggs. It relaxed his dignity of bearing and expression. Let him sleep. He wouldn't disturb him.

Softly he crept past Wiggs to the bathroom. A cold plunge would feel good.

Wiggs was awakened by sound. He jumped up guiltily. His first thought on seeing the empty bed was that his master had decamped. Once fully awake, however, he realized that the sound which had roused him was that of water running in a tub. Reassured, he decided to get washed and tidied up himself.

When he returned he found Jerry robed in a dressinggown, seated before a dead fire, manicuring his nails.

Wiggs placed a Penzance morning paper on the table within reach, and then condescended to rake out the ashes and rebuild the fire.

Jerry picked up the paper. He rubbed his eyes. His sight seemed a little queer. It was as if he were reading through running water. He glanced up at the

top of the sheet and read the date. His eyes were indeed queer.

"Wiggs," he said, "read that. What is to-day?"

"It is Friday, the 24th of October."

"Friday! Wasn't it Wednesday that Miss Polly came? Wednesday night that I made a fool of myself? Didn't I ask you when I first woke this morning if it was the end of the world? Isn't this Thursday morning?"

"This is Friday, sir," persisted Wiggs.

"God in heaven!" cried Jerry wildly, putting both hands to his head.

He had lost twenty-four hours—lost them for ever! Fate had indeed taken a subtle revenge. The man who had pretended a loss of memory had been given an actual taste of it.

For a moment Jerry felt as if he were plunging through space.

"Wiggs," he asked with tragic voice, "tell me honestly, do you think I'm losing my mind?"

"Oh, I 'ope not, sir." So miserable, so nakedly natural were Wiggs's sensations, he had actually let go an aitch. He wanted to tell Jerry about that lapse of time, to offer some consolation, but he didn't dare say anything without the permission of the doctor. Those twenty-four hours had been a nightmare to Wiggs. It was all incomprehensible. Wiggs felt befuddled almost to the point of insanity himself. He had hitherto had a great respect for the medical profession. Now he had only distrust and fear.

Mr. Trevider, save for an inordinate propensity for sleep, had to all appearances been quite normal during all that time in which he had been under the spell cast over him by Dr. Baragwaneth.

His body had retained its normal functions; his relish of the tea and bread had looked normal; his

speech had in no way been peculiar when he had on several occasions requested a drink of water. And in the afternoon of yesterday he had asked for a clean handkerchief. How could a gentleman have a desire for a clean handkerchief if he were unconscious?

No, there was no belittling the serious queerness of his master's condition during the past twenty-four hours. . . One couldn't reasonably make light of it. And Wiggs felt personally responsible. Had he not in a regrettable moment taken it upon himself to suggest to Miss Trevider that the doctor be summoned?

Overcome by compunctions, he so far forgot himself as to sit down, or rather sink down in a chair, and in another moment his attitude of despair was a replica of that of his master.

There was a tiny rap at the door which neither Jerry nor Wiggs heard. The door gently opened. There was a ripple of gay laughter.

"What in the world is the matter with you two? Of all the pictures of concentrated gloom! . . . Has Wiggs been discharged or has he given notice?"

Polly stood daintily balancing a breakfast tray. She shook her head as Wiggs sprang to attention and offered to relieve her.

Jerry stood in abashed shyness, fearfully aware of his unkempt appearance in dressing-gown.

Polly looked more lovable, more adorably exquisite than ever, attired as she was in a pale blue négligée edged with maribou. Her hair was loosely caught up in a great knot. Dozens of little stray locks curled maddeningly around her forehead, ears, and back of neck.

As Polly looked into his eyes she observed a queer look of concentration and that same unnameable something she'd seen two nights before. Her blood again thrilled inexplicably and warningly. She quickly

denied her own intuitions and with perfect self-control said gaily:

"Here's the crispest bacon, the freshest butter, the hottest toast, the smoothest porridge, the richest cream, and the strongest coffee in all England. Doesn't that

cheer you up, Monty dear?"

Jerry couldn't reply, "Oh! You angel! You darling thing! Don't you realize I love you more than any man ever loved any woman—more than Anthony loved Cleopatra, more than Abélard loved Héloïse, more than Aucassin loved Nicolette? . . ." so he didn't say anything. He only looked silly and gazed at Polly so peculiarly, so devouringly, that she felt her cheeks going hot and her heart getting throbby. But, of course, it was all due to her own silliness. She felt thoroughly ashamed of herself. She advanced and placed the tray on the table beside Jerry's chair. Then she got on her knees at his feet.

"Now, Monty, let's see your tongue. That's right. Looks fairly decent. Now you may put it in again so I can kiss you."

She kissed him, and Jerry wished he could die right then and there and carry the memory of the sensation with him through all eternity. After all, there wasn't so much to be said for oblivion after death. . . .

"The doctor said I might bring your breakfast up myself this morning."

The doctor? Jerry gave a start. Things were coming back. . . . He now realized that the last thing he remembered was the prick of a needle and the after sensation of feeling like an old cork floating out on the tide.

Yes. The doctor had used a hypodermic needle. He's been *drugged!*

"How dared he!" he cried aloud. "What did that infernal old owl do to me? What did he give me?"

Jerry leapt to his feet in a state of uncontrollable fury. "What right had he? I wasn't ill."

"Monty, darling!" Polly rose and put her arms about his neck. "Please don't excite yourself. It's all right."

"All right to make a gap in my memory of a day and a night?" Jerry savagely drew away from the imprisonment of Polly's arms.

He walked the floor. Suddenly the thought came to him that he had been off guard during those twenty-four hours. What had his unguarded tongue divulged? What secrets might he not have babbled? He grew physically weak and staggered slightly. Polly's quick eye detected the wobble, and she flew to his side, took his arm, and led him back to his chair.

"Now I shall feed the savage beast myself. I'll make out I'm a lion-tamer. 'Of lion-bitings she was almost dead.' Do you know that tragic song? Now if my fierce old roaring lion loves me, he'll open mouth w-i-d-e!"

Jerry laughed and opened his mouth. Who could withstand such cajolery? Polly fed him a spoonful of porridge. Most of it went on his dressing-gown. They laughed and mopped it up.

Then Polly tucked the serviette under his chin.

"Now you look just as you did when you were a little bit o' boy. But your hair is too smooth. Must rumple it up. There now! Look just as you used to in your little holland suits with hair all tousled."

Jerry felt drunk with happiness.

"Polly—your note—your wonderful note. It was a bear!" He looked a universe of appreciation into her eyes.

"Did you like it? I'm so glad. But you must eat now and not think about burnt bridges. Give me a sip of your coffee." He did and then found the exact spot on the cup where her lips had rested.

As she bent her head for a second sip, a curling wisp of hair brushed his hand. A thrill went over him. Before he could restrain himself he had bent over and kissed the top of her head.

To Jerry it was an act of unpardonable abandon. Polly took the kiss as a matter of course.

"Who' you love?" she asked in a whisper, glancing slyly up at him.

"You!" said Jerry, almost dropping the cup.

"Oh dear! You don't play it worth a cent any more," Polly pouted. "The game's no fun if you don't keep the other fellow in suspense. Why, you could have first said Celia, and then—— Oh, I'd almost forgotten to tell you—the box has arrived from Plymouth!"

"What box?"

"Rings," she said in awed tones.

"Rings?"

"Yes, idiot. For Celia's choice. Oh! I do wish I was engaged to somebody or other. . . "

The mention of Celia's name had produced a sudden chill in Jerry's system.

"She's coming over some time this forenoon—to see you, you know. We telephoned her that you'd—well, that you'd not been well. So you can show them to her when she comes. Lucky girl!" Polly sighed.

"Polly," cried Jerry desperately, "you'll stay by me when Celia comes—don't leave me—promise. I—I don't feel well enough yet to see her alone."

"Monty Trevider!" Polly stared at him with stark surprise. "Who ever heard of a boy wanting his sister to be present during the moment—that awful, exquisite, marvellous, solemn moment when he puts the engagement ring on his fiancée's finger and kisses it."

"Kisses it?" repeated Jerry dully, as a memory of a kiss he had once tried to bestow on Celia's hand came back to him. He hadn't forgotten her comment of "slush." "Not on your life!" he said aloud. "I'll not kiss it."

"Monty!" again said Polly, this time with serious alarm. Then she took Jerry's hand and said: "Look at me."

Jerry looked up miserably. The whole tragedy of his dislike of Celia, the wretched unhappiness bred of his anomalous position, showed in his eyes. Then the expression changed and Jerry forgot his wretchedness and realized only that he was looking into the fathomless eyes of his beloved.

Polly's eyes fell and her thoughts became so confused she forgot the question which had been on the brim of her lips.

"Promise," begged Jerry.

"Promise what?"

"That you'll not leave me when—when Celia comes."

Polly stared in the fire. She was still pondering over that strange request when the door opened and Dr. Baragwaneth entered.

Scenting the powder of battle, and noticing the quick flash of Jerry's eye, she, with a few merry words, made a graceful but rapid exit.

Jerry rose, with smouldering fury in his breast, and faced the doctor.

"Did you give me hashish?" he asked.

The doctor did not acknowledge the prerogative of any patient to question him.

"Why do you ask?" he temporized.

"What did you inject into me?" asked Jerry, with white lips and a peculiarly calm voice.

"Merely something to quiet you a little," replied the doctor. "Now let's see how your pulse is this

morning."

"No, you don't," said Jerry. "Don't touch me. Can't you see I'm exerting every ounce of control I possess to restrain myself? I'm restraining the almost overpowering desire to knock you down."

The doctor received this statement with professional calm, merely taking advantage of the moment's opportunity to observe the pupils of Jerry's eyes. There was still a slight dilation—drugs not yet entirely excreted from the system. There would probably still be a little defect in the vision. "Mr. Trevider," said the doctor in a tone which implied he had not heard the last remark of the patient, "do you by any chance recall ever having heard the name"—he paused as if trying to recall something himself, then continued—"name of Jerrold Emerson Middleton?"

Jerry was taken off guard. The shot had hit an undefended target square in the centre. All the fury, all the desire to fight suddenly deserted him. He was breaking out into a cold perspiration. How much did this man know? How much had he, Jerry, given away under the spell of that dam' drug?

Suddenly the flush and fury again spread over his cheeks, the flash of battle to his eyes. He'd not be trapped by anybody. Whatever he might have told when drugged, he could disclaim responsibility for; he could hold tight to that invaluable asset—loss of memory. No one, not even this crafty old scoundrel, could prove that he was Jerry Middleton; could ever prove that he had deliberately faked lost memory, but he knew himself not to be Monty Trevidor. No,

by heaven! he'd not be trapped into a confession. He'd confess only when he felt good and damned ready. He would not reassume the name of Jerrold Emerson Middleton until he chose of his own free will. He's see this old jay bird in hell before he'd confess anything under compulsion.

But Jerry knew that the keen eyes of Dr. Baragwaneth had never left his face since the question had been fired. He'd seen the effect of his big Bertha. That had to be accounted for.

"Something stirred here, for a brief second, but-" He paused, pressing his temple. "No, I—it's gone."

"You are sure you don't now recall any association connected with the name?" asked the doctor.

Jerry looked the doctor steadily in the eye and lied: "No."

"Do you recall any of the events which led to your-which antedated your being taken in charge by the police on Euston Road? Do you not find your mind cleared of many fogs this morning?"

"Haven't noticed any change," declared Jerry.

The doctor looked pained. He then took a searching survey of Jerry again. "Quite sure about not recalling any one intimately connected with yourself by the name of Middleton?"

Jerry lost all control of himself. He'd not be hectored, badgered, third-degreed by this son of a gun.

"Go to hell!" he said, and turned away and lit a cigarette.

The doctor again ignored the breach of good manners and remarked: "Eat all you choose and get out in the garden to-day. It's a genuine St. Martin's summer day. Saw a heron this morning."

He held out his hand.

On first thought Jerry decided to ignore it.

On second thought, after a look into the doctor's eyes, he decided differently.

He extended his hand and permitted it to be shaken. Perhaps, after all, it would not be wise to antagonize this gentleman too much.

CHAPTER XXI

"Damme!" thought Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh, on hearing the tones of Mr. Coolie's suave voice in the hall outside his study, "that curate here again! Yet . . . well, after all, such undeveloped things as women and children probably need the diversion and panacea of the spiritual diet—it's the treacle on their brown bread of life."

He smoothed down his already perfectly smooth British head, then thought less consecutively, but no less emphatically, that it was just as well that Celia was safely in the engagement harness again. If that underpaid parson-chap had designs on his fortune he'd come a cropper.

Neurotic girl—Celia. Her poor dear mother had been neurotic too... temperamental.... The Boughton-Leighs, Heaven be praised, had never had temperaments. Celia, he recalled, had passed through four different apotheoses since her twelfth year.

First: Tied-to-the-apron-strings-of-her-mother attitude, at an age when she should have been romping out of doors, growing into a healthy young animal.

Second: Richardson - Fielding — Jane Austen — Rhoda Broughton, heroine composite type; romance, sighs, gloomings, and talking about her soul. To talk about one's soul was, to Sir Wilfred, immodest if not definitely indecent.

Third: Began well in a seeming passion for sports, showing what purported to be the first trace of true Boughton-Leigh instincts; but the war punctuated

that period and the enthusiasm for golf, tennis, riding, and hunting became magnified into a Joan of Arc pose. Nothing would answer but to gird up her loins and dash to France. If she'd been a boy, as she ought to have been, of course her place would have been France. His son-it goes without saying-would have been among the glorious "Contemptibles." If he'd lived—or ever been born, to survive—he would have worn the Mons star. But a girl! A battlefield was no place for a decent girl. In his youth the female followers of an army had been termed "Vivandières." They were not mentioned before one's family. Of course the women had behaved extraordinarily well in the late war, behaved almost as if they were men, but all the same that sort of thing meant a loss of femininity, tended to lower the standard -feminine and masculine. It, moreover, tended to belittle men. Women should never be permitted to demonstrate that they could equal or emulate men in provinces and fields essentially masculine. If Nature had intended women to do men's work, she would have endowed women with logical brains and the proper abdominal muscles.

Fourth: Religious. That infernal, designing, Jesuitical Coolie had taken advantage of a depleted physical condition due to a morbid giving way to grief after the loss of her mother, and encouraged the girl to a most impertinent interest in the souls of others—to say nothing of her own. Celia was bounding about in the homes of the defenceless poor, prating to them, in the most abandoned way, about salvation and the necessity of buying that salvation by a more regular attendance at services. The way in which she openly discussed religious matters at the table, before the butler, was, to put it restrainedly, not well bred. It was almost Wesleyan.

She must see more of young Trevider, when that wholesome, if somewhat gay, young man, was again out of the doctor's hands. A Trevider would have the trained hand to drive that little filly of his.

Sir Wilfred decided that he would be well advised to talk over Celia's aggravated spiritual excitement with that estimable woman, Miss Trevider. Wonderful woman that! There were only a few surviving types of the old system. Miss Trevider was the perfect type—a magnificent survival. He wondered vaguely just what Miss Trevider's age might be, wondered with a widower's half-abashed recruiting inner eye. She looked fifty. She might be less. She was like a little, round, red apple kept rather late into the spring; still round and healthily coloured, but just a little—he balked at the word shrivelled, and substituted "soft."

His thoughts were abruptly switched from ruminations on Miss Trevider by some ashes falling on his left arm. They inartistically fell on the mourning band worn for the late Lady Boughton-Leigh. As he brushed them away he was reminded that he was absorbed in deeply mourning a late and very much lamented wife.

His thoughts reverted to the daughter of that wife. The fifth stage of Celia—what would that be? A horrible idea blew across the conservative seas of his mind, ruffling it to white caps. God bless us! Politics. Be just like Celia to go in for politics next. Most disorganizing affair that talk of a woman probably getting into the House of Commons. If such a thing happened one could never again feel safe in regard to the feminine members of one's household.

He would see to it that Celia would be shortly married—as soon, in fact, as a decent period of mourning would permit. Nothing like a husband,

home, and expected children to keep a woman safely tied. Keep them occupied!

More than ever Sir Wilfred felt Celia to have been guilty of an unpardonable affront to him when she had had the inconsiderateness to be born a girl. He really felt, and thought, as if Celia had, by some personal and perverse choice of sex, deliberately robbed him—her father—of an heir to the baronetcy. Celia had balked the continuance of title. It was as if she had, by so doing, offended the British system.

Had his late lamented wife been less neurotic, more the simple healthy breeder, she might have made another effort to do her duty and produce a son, thereby mitigating her first offence. But no. The doctor—doctors are all fools, and in league with their silly admirers, women—the doctor had said Lady Boughton-Leigh was not to have more children. Had, in fact, asked him—him, Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh—if he wished to be a murderer!

Thanks to that idiot of a doctor, here he was to-day, at the age of fifty-five, with a fortune ever increasing, and no son to inherit it.

An unseemly thought fluttered across Sir Wilfred's mind—the vision of some strong, able-bodied woman, the realization of his own unsapped virility, his long-restrained natural appetites; but these vagarious suggestions of some unscrupulous imp were thrust violently out of the door of his brain as he concentrated on the spectacle of the use to which that magnificent family vault, which he had built only the preceding year for future emergencies, had been so recently put. Little had he thought, when he saw that vault completed, how soon it would have an occupant.

Sir Wilfred enjoyed a few moments of tempered grief. No, it was no time, with a sorrow only nine days old, to be thinking of the future. His thoughts must

still, for some months, be delicately dedicated to the past. "Chaque chose à sons temps."

The butler brought in the morning post. Sir Wilfred felt in no mood for business letters. He pushed them aside. They seemed an impertinence when one was recruiting in the country after such a distressing ordeal as the loss of one's wife. Sir Wilfred always declared himself a country man. As a matter of fact, more than a month of Cornwall, in one dose, bored him insufferably. He was at home only in the stir of the town. His was but the magnified soul of the tradesman.

He liked, however, to declare to fellow-members of his London club that the only English society, worthy of the name, existed to-day among the county folk. They alone were preserving the ideals of the oldestablished order. When he voiced this sort of thing, he felt it imbued him with a sort of county-family aroma.

He had a veneration for the county families. He had a veneration for Miss Felicity, as representing a county family, the lineage of which was lost in the fogs enveloping the early Britons.

Miss Felicity, in her untitled magnificence, made him feel his baronetcy a provincial, almost tawdry thing. He had never forgotten overhearing a remark she had once made. Said Miss Trevider: "We have always been staunch adherents to the Crown, but never panderers to power. We have been, and always shall be, simply Treviders."

When with others—the other untitled ones—Sir Wilfred frequently enjoyed his own title, but with Miss Felicity he felt uncomfortably apologetic on account of it. To be sure, the baronetcy had not been bought by contributions to party funds or large donations to charity. It had been conferred on his grandfather

for services to the Crown—moral services. If Celia continued at her present spiritual gallop, she might even rival her great-grandfather in moral immortality.

His grandfather had been immoderately moral—and tradition had it intemperately religious. Perhaps inheritance, taking the hedge of two generations, had landed on Celia. Sir Wilfred nevertheless believed in women of the better classes being passively religious and attending church occasionally (as an example to others) out of respect due all English institutions. They should, however, shed their piety on the church porch. Such a code made for an easy, comfortable home atmosphere.

But he had indeed wandered far from his original thought. . . . He had seated himself at his desk to elucidate the problem of Celia. What was to be done with her now? He didn't want Celia in town—at this season. At any season town produced anæmia in women. They belonged to the country.

He could not, however, leave her down here in Cornwall alone, without her mother—with only the old housekeeper as companion. His mind flitted discerningly over the list of possible relatives. He disliked and distrusted most of his relatives. Relatives were, as a rule, odious.

"I'll advertise for a companion. Widow of army officer preferred. They are generally gentlewomen."

That decision reached with businesslike promptitude, he immediately transcribed the advertisement, stamped the envelope, addressed it to *The Times*, and put in the rack for to-be-posted letters.

His ear was at that moment again assailed by the mellifluous tones of Mr. Coolie making his adieux.

"After all," thought Sir Wilfred, less acridly, "he and his affairs are probably a blessing to the poor girl in her loneliness." It did not occur to Sir Wilfred

that he might occupy himself with the diversion of Celia. He realized the chasm, separating temperament from no temperament, fixed by nature between them. To attempt to bridge that chasm would be to attempt the absurd, and the absurd had no place in Sir Wilfred's scheme of life.

He should, after all, be grateful to any one who could provide Celia with interest, but, "Bless my soul!" he almost cried aloud, "why should an engaged girl require outside interests? Against nature, I call it. She should be entirely preoccupied, preparing her mind for the proper readjustment necessary to the relationship of marriage."

Dash it all! he'd go and talk over the matter of Celia—everything pertaining to Celia—with that gentle, simple woman, Miss Trevider. Simple—but permanent.

To realize that some of that permanent blood would be the heritage of his grandchildren was a pleasant thought to Sir Wilfred. It had made the contemplation of the eventful marriage of Celia to Monty Trevider pleasant, even in the chaotic stage which that youth was passing through prior to his disappearance. After all, the wild oats sown had been Trevider oats. Of course he had to ignore that fact when he had had the disagreeable half-hour's talk with Trevider six years ago. It had truly hurt Sir Wilfred far more to say the things he felt obliged to say to his future son-in-law than it had hurt young Trevider to hear them.

Sir Wilfred arranged his unopened morning post neatly in a pile in mid-desk, to be attended to immediately after lunch, and went to the hall to get his hat.

As he passed out of the front door he observed Celia

going through the garden gate. He followed in her footsteps, through the garden gate to meadow, but he made no effort to overtake her.

The destination of both father and daughter was Tolvean.

CHAPTER XXII

Celia and her father arrived at Tolvean in close sequence, and found Miss Felicity, Polly, and Jerry together in the library.

Jerry had been ensconced in the most comfortable chair by Miss Felicity, who insisted on regarding him as an invalid.

"Sorry to hear you've been under the weather, my boy," said Sir Wilfred, patting Jerry affectionately on the shoulder. "Slight attack of indigestion, I presume. We all eat too much." Sir Wilfred was himself the thin, dynamic type to which a hearty appetite is unknown. "Never saw such an eater as that young Coolie. Gout will get him in a few years."

"Coolie?" repeated Polly. "What a funny name. Who is he—a newcomer?"

Celia felt it her prerogative to reply to the question. The tone of the reply avenged the reflection on the name of Coolie. "He is," said she icily, "the new curate and a friend of mine."

Polly was archly silent.

"Mr. Coolie is a most estimable person who"—Sir Wilfred paused and his eyes twinkled— "who feels his sphere of action much too lmiited in our phlegmatic neighbourhood. He wishes to be sent to British Columbia, where, as he expresses it, in his literary style, 'great sins are committed by charming people.'"

"Oh! I must know him," cried Polly enthusiastically. "He sounds quite thrilling. I hope he's unmarried.

Men are so scarce in Trewarthenith."

Miss Felicity, with a tactful effort to relieve the evident discomfort of Celia, hastened to put in a

reassuring word regarding Mr. Coolie.

"I understand that his mother was of gentle birth—one of the Smith-Russells of Kent, in fact. She poor lady, however, made a rather indiscreet marriage, without her family's approval. She suffered sufficiently for her lack of judgment and good taste—most shocking poverty. It seems that by great self-denial and ingenuity she managed to get one of her sons into the Army and the other into the Church. So you see . . ." She left the sentence unfinished, open, and in so doing metaphorically gave the sons of a Smith-Russell the opportunity of re-entering, by the agency of arms and prayer, the gate leading back to the fold of the elect.

"Which all means that this young clerical Coolie must do himself well matrimonially," Sir Wilfred summed up practically. "I think he would be very much interested to meet you, Polly, my dear, very . . ." Sir Wilfred's voice trailed off into a vibrating silence.

Celia rose with nervous impatience. Going to a window she whiffed some odourless cyclamens there flowering in pots. She hoped her boredom would make itself evident.

Miss Felicity was the only one present at all sensitive to Celia's thought waves. Her trained sense of the hostess made her acutely aware of the emotions of her guests. She rose, inspired with the means of reestablishing interest—pleasant interest in the mind of dear Celia: the as yet unopened box from Plymouth. With a glance at Polly she excused herself. Polly understood and in turn wirelessed a significant message to Jerry.

Conversation remained at the halt until Miss Felicity reappeared.

"Monty dear," said she, "I think it would be warmer for you in the drawing-room—perhaps Celia would accompany you." She turned to Sir Wilfred. "I have a few matters upon which I would very much appreciate your advice. Shall we go up to my morning-room?" Then in a very casual tone she intimated to Polly that she believed Paynter wished to speak to her about something.

Polly responded immediately to the cue, and was hastening past Jerry's chair when she was brought to a very abrupt stop. Her skirt had been clutched. She turned and looked down into the mute, heart-rending appeal in Jerry's eyes. She tried to wriggle loose, unnoticed by the others, but Jerry was merciless. Seizing her arm he rose, and, leaning heavily as if he were actually the invalid Miss Trevider supposed him, said to Celia: "Shall we go to the drawing-room?"

Arrived there, the first object which met Jerry's eye was the box from Plymouth, placed ostentatiously on the table near the fireplace.

His intention was to ignore it, but Polly's intuition of his intention expressed itself in nudges, crescending to pinches. He succumbed.

"Oh yes, Celia," said he, "here is a package which you must help me open—you and Polly. Polly is so bursting with curiosity, I had to promise to let her have a look-in at the show."

Polly flashed an indignant glance at him, then with a laugh decided to play up. "Yes," said she, "I'm just dying to see them—I mean it. Have you any idea what's in here, Celia?"

"Not the faintest," said Celia, with a suppressed yawn of boredom.

Jerry produced his knife.

Polly, down on her knees beside Celia, on whose lap the box now reposed, cut the string and undid the paper.

"Now! I mustn't profane it by another touch. You

do the rest, Celia."

Celia, with complete lack of enthusiasm, slid the wooden lid back. Six little white leather boxes were revealed, packed in a nest of crumpled tissue paper.

"What are these?" she asked indifferently.

"Open and find out," said Jerry. "See which is the Cinderella slipper that will fit your—no, that's not the right simile——" he broke off, with a nervous laugh.

Celia unhooked the first small case. From its white velvet cushion flashed the blue-white flames of four diamonds set in a row. Her eyes seemed to reflect the cold glitter of the ice-stones. Her cheeks grew pale. As one in a dream she opened the other boxes.

"Try them on," whispered Polly.

Celia picked up a ring at random—it chanced to be the first one opened—and slipped it over the fourth finger of her left hand. It fitted. She left it there, staring curiously down upon it.

"Aren't you going to try them all on?" asked Polly, chilled to the heart and offended in all her romantic ideals by this unsentimental way of conducting a wonderful and momentous occasion.

"What's the use?" asked Celia wearily. "This one fits."

"But . . ." Polly's brow puckered, her chin almost quivered. She looked from Celia to Jerry and from Jerry to Celia. "If that one is your choice, isn't Monty going to put it on—on with a wish?"

"A wish!" laughed Celia sarcastically. "What punk! Wishes are all rubbish. You're still just a silly child,

Polly." She methodically closed the five unchosen rings in their little boxes, crushed the tissue paper about them, slid the wooden top back in place, and handed the box to Polly with a look which seemed to say, "This ends the subject under discussion."

Polly lifted the box reverently. From her expression one might have thought she was holding a tiny baby's coffin. She felt she was going to scream, weep, or do something dreadful if she did not quickly get out of this oppressive atmosphere. Perhaps, thought she, staring down at the little wooden box, it had all been so unnatural because of her presence—the audience of a third. Perhaps Celia had felt she must camouflage. Perhaps they were both pretending all this horrid indifference to shield themselves and their real emotions from her. It was all Monty's fault. Why, oh why! had he forced her to come into the room?

She looked up reproachfully at Jerry. She'd make him realize all she felt, and let him see she wouldn't endure her intolerable position there with them another moment.

She couldn't engage Jerry's eye. He was staring with unfocused vision past her. His eyes seemed to reveal his naked, crucified soul. Polly saw the misery, the hopelessness of that soul.

She turned her eyes from him with an acute sense of pain in her breast. She looked at Celia. Celia, too, was staring straight before her, staring down an endless vista of years—years of marriage. . . . Her eyes reminded Polly of those of a trapped hare she had once seen.

"Oh!" she gasped, and turning, ran blindly toward the door, out of the room, up the stairs, and into her own room. She tossed the box on the bed, flung herself face downward, and clapped her hands to her ears as if to shut out something being shrieked at her.

Suddenly she rolled over, sat up, white-lipped and trembling, as she said aloud: "Why, they don't love one another! They don't love—— Oh, heavens! They don't love each other!"

CHAPTER XXIII

AFTER lunch Jerry, evading Aunt Felicity's watchful eye, her kindly but unnecessary cuddlings and attentions, got out of the house. He made for the forest—the forest where on his first night in Cornwall he had been after taking Celia home.

He recalled the awakened bird, the scuttling hare—his accusers. Even then, within five hours of his arrival at Trewarthenith, he had, through his own conscience, felt himself labelled "impostor."

Could it be possible only a fortnight had elapsed since his arrival at Tolvean? What an absurd delusion actual time was. Fifteen days as reckoned by the calendar. Fifteen centuries as counted by the spirit.

As far as actual events were concerned but little had happened since that Friday of a fortnight ago—little externally. Lady Boughton-Leigh had died—her death preceded by the renewal of her daughter's lapsed engagement; Lady Boughton-Leigh had been buried; Polly had arrived in England; he, Jerry, had got drunk; the doctor had been called in and had given his patient "something to quiet him"; Celia had placed his engagement ring on her finger. Surely nothing very arresting or unusual in any of these events, badly stated!

But—the colossal, the staggering contrast of the banal outer events and the crucial experiences of the soul! The amazing difference between the outer and inner lives we lead! Surely, thought Jerry, he had gone the entire gamut of the emotions, this past fortnight.

He now knew the from-hell-to-heaven-and-back-again road of the human soul.

Yet, supposing he were in a position to write any one, how trivial his letters would be. Letters! They are, as a rule, but masks. The reason, thought Jerry, we can't keep in closer touch with those from whom we are long separated is that letters usually tell nothing that is vital, illuminating, or revealing. Letters for the most part consist of a mere statement of facts, a delineation of events—where the writer has been, what he has done —not what he has thought. No revelation reaches us of the inner life led by the distant loved one or friend, no glimpse given of the psychological experiences of the soul, the effect of actual events upon mind, spirit, and character, the far roads travelled by the imagination, the new horizons of the heart. Jerry felt he had been enormously undeveloped up to a fortnight ago; he couldn't have realized all these things then, but he had grown up supernaturally, like Jack's beanstalk, in the past fourteen days and nights.

As he wandered as goalless as a butterfly, his thoughts flitted—not from flower to flower, but from thorn to thorn. He thought of Celia, of the clinching episode of the ring, of his hopeless love for Polly, of all the piercing, bruising circumstances developed by his false position. He felt himself a helpless insect. Fate seemed to love to lay a lot of fly-paper around and then watch the helpless human-insects walk on to it. . . .

Jerry was blind to all beauty around him; he was unconscious of the sun, of dappling light on tree-trunks and ferns, of gradations of shadow and mystery, of the many eyes of wary, wild things concentrated stealthily upon his every movement, of the trepidations and flutterings in the breasts of the hunted creatures, so trained, through inherited fears, to a distrust of man.

He threw himself down on a bed of dried, old-gold fern and concentrated on the thought of the doctor. He thought of the doctor's question that morning regarding his knowledge of the name of Jerrold Emerson Middleton.

He must decide on what would be the most prudent, the most advantageous line to now pursue. According to Wiggs, the old goat intended to drop in again late that afternoon.

"If I only know just what I said, I could plan," thought Jerry. "If I only knew what his job-lots thinks, I could cope with the situation, but the rotten part of the thing is, I'm striking out into the dark whatever I do, and when that's the case, any move one makes is pretty sure to be the wrong one." It was like staggering round one of those mazes, so dear to the English heart, only this maze had no centre, only deceptive paths leading one continually up against a blank hedge.

After hours of concentration, during which Jerry mentally conceived and rejected a hundred different courses of action, he got to the point of confusion where his mind simply ran round and round a racetrack. Exhausted physically, because utterly wearied mentally, he got up and dragged himself back through the woods, and across the meadows, home.

It was past the tea hour, but the thoughtful Wiggs had placed a tray in Jerry's bedroom; a silver kettle awaited him, steaming expectantly over methylated spirits.

As Jerry sipped the most revivifying of all beverages, his exhaustion began to pass. He picked up a book from the table—one by Anatole France—and opened it at random. He read:

". . . Quand le système solaire n'était encore qu'une pâle nébuleuse, formant dans l'éther une couronne légère d'une circonférence mille fois plus vaste que l'orbite de Neptune, il y avait belle lurette que nous étions tous conditionés, determinés, destinés irrévocablement et que votre responsabilité, ma chère enfant, la mienne, . . . celle de tous les hommes, était, non pas attenuée, mais abolie d'avance. Tous nos mouvements, causés par des mouvements antérieurs de la matière, sont soumis aux lois qui gouvernent les forces cosmiques, et la mécanique humaine n'est qu'un cas particulier de la mécanique universelle."

Jerry looked up from the page and mused. Same old cry of fatality! Same old cry of Sophocles. . . . Fated, predestined. . . . Mark Twain's first impulse of the first atom. . . .

Suddenly, like a flash of irradiation from without, his brain, having been lifted, by reading the thoughts of another, from his own thoughts, for even a few moments, became clear, and he saw what he considered the rational course to be pursued with Dr. Baragwaneth. He put this decision into words a moment after the doctor's entrance.

"Look here," said he in his most ingratiating, frank way. "I've got to beg your pardon for my rudeness this morning—and for something worse. . . . I lied to you, sir."

The doctor waved a hand as if to dismiss the whole matter as of no consequence, but Jerry was determined to focus attention upon the importance of his morning's behaviour.

"I lied," continued he—"lied almost involuntarily. You see it was the suddenness of your question. It seemed to hit me square in the centre of my brain. Something seemed to snap like that"—Jerry snapped his fingers—"when you said the name of Middleton. I realized I had heard the name somewhere, sometime. It had a queer and almost uncomfortable familiarity

just as if—how can I express it?—as if, for instance, I had been an actor and it might have been a character I had played—the rôle of Middleton. Do you see—do I make myself comprehensible?"

"I am very much interested," said the doctor. "Go

"I remembered—that is, as I have said, I recognized a familiarity in the name, but instantly that familiarity began to grow faint, and my brain, memory wobbled. I distrusted my first impression. I denied it to myself and to you. I said the name stirred nothing—was totally unfamiliar to me."

The doctor was listening attentively, with a disconcerting degree of concentration.

"And during the day," said he to Jerry, "have you recalled in what relation that name stood to you or you to it?"

"No," said Jerry steadily; "and that's where I want to enlist your assistance. I presume I must have suggested the name to you, by something I said, while under the influence of your quieting medicine. Won't you help me by telling me in just what connection I used the name? It might make something stir here." Jerry tapped his head. "You see"—he gave his most engaging smile, tempered by a certain degree of pathos—"I've only you to lean on for help."

The doctor was rhythmically tapping a finger on his leg. He mentally turned over his own intuitions, his theories; he formed a few new demi-opinions, and kept them all to himself.

Jerry grew nervous under the tension of the delaying silence. "Can't you help me?" he reiterated appealingly.

"Afraid not," said Dr. Baragwaneth. "I don't really feel it would be wise. You must find out for yourself. Use your brain, stimulate your memory, by trying to

reach back. Try—but don't try too hard. Say over to yourself every once in a while the name: Jerrold Emerson Middleton."

Jerry could endure no more of this maddening checkmating, intentional or unintentional. He decided that the doctor was maliciously playing the cat-and-mouse game with him. He leapt up with a suppressed oath and paced the floor. He came back and faced the doctor. "So you won't help me!" he cried.

"No," said the doctor imperturbably. "You must solve your own problem. It lies with you to work out your own salavation."

Every word uttered by the doctor seemed to Jerry deliberately ambiguous. He thought: "He knows it all, dam' him. He thinks he's got me in his power. But I'll never let him know I suspect that. Has he mentioned the name of Jerry Middleton to Aunt Felicity?" He turned and asked with a well-simulated casual interest: "What does my aunt think of it all?"

"I have not yet discussed it with Miss Trevider," said the doctor, with a slight stress on the word "yet." "I want to go more deeply into the—er—matter, come to some definite conclusion, before I speak—report to her."

Cussed old fox! Checkmated again. . . .

"I'll see you from time to time," said the doctor comfortingly. "You see, Mr. Trevider, you must not forget I am entitled—under the circumstances of your affliction—to regard you to a certain degree as a—er—mental case. You were very angry with me for drugging you, as you termed it; the peculiar propensities of your mental obsessions made it advisable, if not absolutely imperative; it was certainly advisable to keep you confined to your bed and render impossible your intention to take Scotch leave. I hope the desire to run away has now departed."

"Run away!" repeated Jerry in stupefaction.

"Yes. Your servant informed Miss Trevider you had expressed your intention Wednesday night to clear out."

"Good Lord!" cried Jerry. "Did I say that?"

"So it seems. Well, I wouldn't do it if I were you." The doctor smiled. "And now tell me—you feel none the worse for my treatment?"

"Physically I feel bully-fitter than I've felt for a

long time," Jerry acknowledged.

"Mentally you feel a little troubled, eh? Just so. Well, perhaps it's only the clouds before clearing. Now I'm going to leave a tonic for you. You seem rather anæmic. Need general toning up. Think, but don't worry. Worry is only sick thought. Sick thoughts never lead to anything healthy."

The doctor placed the bottle on the table and without the formality of a hand-clasp wished Jerry a good

evening.

Jerry, left alone, paced the confines of his room as a beast its cage.

Pretty situation—was ever a man in a more damnable situation? If he didn't go stark staring mad soon he'd be lucky. If Fate didn't quickly make up his mind to open the door of escape he'd find his pawn too broken to provide any further amusement. There was one way to checkmate the Player—do away with oneself! Suicide looked dangerously seductive and triumphant to Jerry just then. It was the one perfectly certain escape. No, dam' it all! That might be only another design of Fate's—to force him to self-inflicted death. He'd be stubborn. He'd not die to order. He'd fight, by Jingo!

His impulse suddenly led him over to the bell-cord. He'd ring for Wiggs and tell him to bring a bottle of Scotch. No. . . . His hand fell. He couldn't ever

trust himself to enjoy the solace of Scotch. He'd proved he couldn't drink as a gentleman, within decent limits.

Wiggs would be coming in any moment now to say it was time to dress for dinner. The infernal wheels of routine, the machinery of the outer life, must go on killingly, no matter what inner conditions one was confronting and battling with. Hang it all—life was a damnable nuisance. . . .

Into his consciousness came a strain of distant music. Some one was playing. No one had touched the baby grand in the drawing-room since his arrival. It had been as closed as a tomb. Who could it be? A memory of the hands of Polly, observed that first night at dinner, came back to Jerry. He'd realized those capable-looking hands were made for something—imbued with the power to express beauty of some kind. He held his breath and listened. . . . Imperious, passionate chords assaulted his heart. It was as if his heart became æolian and the winds of heaven, blowing across the sea, swept the heart-strings. Into his mind came the words:

"So on the ocean of life
We speak one another in passing
Only a word, a look,
Then darkness again and a silence."

The music had hushed on a felt, rather than heard, chord.

"Only a word, a look. . . ." That would probably be his portion of Polly. The hour he made his escape from the snare of circumstance meant darkness and silence for him—it would mean his loss of Polly for ever.

To go back to the world—a world devoid of Polly—

would it not be even more unendurable than the present world of deception and chaos? Never again to see those long lashes sweeping cheek, never again to feel those slim arms about his neck. . . . Would he have the strength to leave and lose it all when the moment of escape came? He groaned aloud.

Walking to the window, he looked down on the formal, old-fashioned rose garden; his eyes strayed to the farther copse; his gaze came back to the terrace, passed the ha-ha, to the pasture land, where his own horse ruminatingly grazed, then over the distant hedges to the fair fields and the even-topped forest—so solid and firm one felt one could walk on top from tree to tree. Into the evening quietude stole the sweet sounds of country life—cows reminding milkers of the hour, birds twittering of the day's gossip and the coming rest, the footfalls of hedgers tramping cottageward through the lanes.

"And I must leave all this," thought Jerry. Oh! the paradise it might have been, this dear old Cornish home, if only it could have been one's own naturally, honestly.

The rooks were now gathering in the old ivy-festooned tree near Polly's window. "So," mused Jerry, "will my thoughts wing home to Tolvean every evening when I'm gone from here, as long as I live."

The odour of burning leaves came to his nostrils, borne on the evening breeze.

His horse looked up from its grazing, and, as if seeing Jerry, whinnied.

Jerry turned abruptly from the window, with a great sigh of yearning.

In his heart was a prayer to Fate—a prayer for delay—delay in the opening of the door of escape.

CHAPTER XXIV

There were many responses to Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh's advertisement for a companion for his daughter. One had been written on paper bearing a crest. He rejected that one. He was suspicious of crested, broken-down gentlewomen. He eventually decided on the widow of an officer of the Indian army, possessed of extraordinarily impressive references. He also liked her name—Spankie. It had a salubriously corrective sound. The name itself was chaperoning.

The lady arrived on the 30th of October. Sir Wilfred, on seeing her, delayed his intended immediate departure till the following Monday. Her beauty was disconcerting—superfluous in a companion—indiscreet in an indigent widow. Sir Wilfred kept her under a close and not unenjoyable scrutiny. After three days he decided she was safe. After all, the poor widowed creature could not be held personally responsible for the magnificent lines of form and feature inflicted upon her by a reckless Providence. Nature had safeguarded her by also bestowing a limited brain. A woman with brilliant mental powers—initiative, with those looks, would have been a menace to society.

Sir Wilfred rubbed his hands together with extreme satisfaction over his choice. He could now return to London with complete ease of mind. It would be pleasant to think upon that strong, healthy, brainless, nerveless Spankie in charge of his neurotic Celia.

He departed, promising to return for the Christmas holidays.

Celia fortunately liked Mrs. Spankie. She found her congenial to her own present trend of thought and interest. Mrs. Spankie was decoratively religious. She liked forms and symbols. She approved of the high-churchness of Mr. Coolie. She enjoyed embroidering, in unison with Celia, the beautiful habiliments of the altar. Mrs. Spankie even discreetly used a certain perfume which delicately suggested the odour of incense. Her exaggeratedly austere mourning subtly made one think of the vestments of a nun.

Mr. Coolie immensely approved of Mrs. Spankie. He, however, sighed afresh whenever he contrasted her beauty of form with the lack of beauty of her bank account. No woman with those lines should be poor. It was inartistically brutal of circumstance.

By the beginning of the second week of Mrs. Spankie's reign, Celia was less enthusiastic over her companion—that is, less enthusiastic over leaving Mrs. Spankie and Mr. Coolie together, for spiritual talks, while she, in deference to her father's expressed desires, "saw more" of her fiancé. Somehow those drives and walks and games of golf with Monty were singularly tiresome. He seemed so preoccupied and dull. Of course after they were married it would perhaps be easier. Matrimony seemed to bring its own benumbing resignation.

Celia believed herself entirely responsible for her now almost daily association with Jerry. Her vanity would have received a blow had she known that Jerry's dutiful behaviour of the past week had been the outcome of the following conversation:

"We haven't had a ride together since I came back," Polly had complained to Jerry the afternoon of Mrs. Spankie's advent as she and he walked through a lane musical with the click-clicking of the hedgers' knives and sickles. "You are always tearing about the estate

yourself, but here more than a week has passed since my return and never once have you invited me to go with you."

Jerry thought of a little snapshot of Polly and her

brother seen on a certain day of discovery.

"I've longed to," he said. "I was waiting for you

to suggest it."

"What about to-morrow?" asked Polly. 'That is," she hastily added, "if you've no engagement with Celia."

"I've none," said Jerry.

"But shouldn't you?" asked Polly. "You two seem to see so little of each other. If I were engaged to a man I'd want to spend every possible hour with him. Don't you feel that way?"

"I don't think Celia does," parried Jerry.

"But—" began Polly, then paused.

"You see," said Jerry, "Celia's taken on a lot of parish visiting, theological instruction, and other uplifting things, so it doesn't leave her much time to spend on unregenerate me."

"Oh!" cried Polly in exasperation. "One can take to being religious when one is old and wrinkled. It's uplifting enough just to breathe and be happy and love, when one is young. Every happy day is a living prayer to me."

"Then, too," Jerry explained, "you see, I'm pretty much occupied myself. I'm trying to help, keep things under my eye—be of some use to Aunt Felicity. My tearing about the estate, as you call it, is not purposeless, or just for my health."

"Then why shouldn't I go with you? I'm just as much interested in Tolvean as you are and I'd like to understand things."

"Would you really care to—would you go about with me?" asked Jerry rather too eagerly. "On condition," said Polly, with the true feminine bargaining spirit. "If you'll give some part of every day to Celia, I'll ride with you every morning."

And so the days were planned.

The daily association with Celia seemed only to convince Jerry of the insuperable barriers of their temperaments. A mutual affection for Celia's dog was their one point of contact.

The daily rides with Polly, the intimate association under the same roof, had developed the first infatuation of Jerry into a deep, abiding love—a love based on the fusion of tastes, which we term congeniality, and that less tangible, magic thing which makes a butterfly or bird know its mate from all others.

During the past week Polly had imperceptibly grown more reserved, less demonstrative.

She had abandoned that adorable impulsive winding of her arms about her supposed brother's neck. She no longer took the initiative in kissing. When the presence of Aunt Felicity demanded some form of affectionate good-night, Polly now offered only a cheek to Jerry. And it had been days since she had played that altogether silly but entrancing game of "Who' you love?"

Jerry was very unhappy. He believed his touch to be distasteful to Polly, and on those rare occasions when physical touch was required, he shrank from it as much as she.

When Polly was not looking at him, Jerry concentrated his eyes upon her with a devouring hunger of heart. When Jerry's eyes were abstracted or diverted, Polly fixed a gaze upon him of unrest and perplexity.

It was on the afternoon of the 7th of November that Jerry asked Polly to go with him to Penzance the following day. To-morrow the carpenter-steward was to drive over in the wagon and meet him there. They were going to get estimates for timber and glass for the construction of new grape and peach houses, and to purchase some new garden tools for Stevens.

"We'll make a lark of it," said Jerry-"spend one whole wonderful day together. The business end of it

can be got over in no time, and then——"
Polly might have said, "But we spend practically every day together anyhow," but she didn't. She promised to be up in time to catch the ten-thirty train at St. Erth.

It was while she was dressing next morning that the post was brought up. There were two letters for Polly —one from her maternal grandmother in Virginia. The other, the address of which was typed, bore the postmark, Johannesburg.

Polly's brow puckered as she stared at the envelope. Johannesburg. . . . She knew no one in South Africa. Her fingers began to quiver. She had a curious presentiment of being on the verge of something.

The letter evidenced much travelling. It had been addressed to her in care of her grandmother. After lying about for probably a week-Polly knew her Virginian grandmother's leisurely, procrastinating methods -it had been forwarded to Charleston. There it had been readdressed to England.

Polly tore the envelope open.

It began:

"My DEAREST POLLY."

She quickly turned the typed pages and read the written termination:

"Your affectionate brother,

MONTY."

Polly trembled from head to foot. Her eyes were dilated. With unsteady fingers she turned the pages over and stared at the date, the 22nd August. She reached for the calendar on her desk. The letter had been written two months and seventeen days ago. Aunt Felicity had seen the picture of the man with lost memory in the morning paper of the 3rd of October, and had gone up to London on Saturday, the 4th. Exactly six weeks had elapsed between the writing of that letter and the publication of the picture. Polly knew nothing about the length of time it would take for a voyage from South Africa by fast boat. It could probably be done in six weeks. Had Monty written this letter before sailing for England—before that thing happened to his head?

Far back in her brain the doubts bred of that first kiss again stirred. Had she not instinctively felt more and more a lack of familiarity in the touch of the Monty now under that roof? Had she not felt an evergrowing disinclination to touch him?

The next moment her doubts began to slip away. Of course the letter had been written by this Monty before—before some accident had befallen him.

So perturbed and torn was she between doubts and efforts to be loyal to her aunt's convictions, Polly scarcely took in the opening lines of the letter, and began to digest the context only when she reached the following:

"And so I really more than covered my expenses out here, in the smoking-room. Held ripping hands the whole voyage. Some very decent English people, living in South Africa, evidently thought me a scion of a distinguished English family, and the lady—just at the protecting age—especially took me under her brooding wing. She invited me to visit them. I did—for two months. Then I was out on my own, and a pretty

wariegated own it was. At first I stayed at a club—my late host had put me up for membership—where I hoped to cover expenses by cards. I had bad luck and was posted for arrears. A wise choice at the races, however, enabled me to square up at the club and left me a little over.

"It hadn't occurred to me up to this time that I might earn money by working. That fact I learned perforce pretty soon. A fellow-member of the club—a draper, in fact—knew me to be on my uppers and approached me with an astounding proposition. He informed me I could 'wear' my clothes and look impressive-look like race. He wanted me to become floor-walker in his men's department. Can you see me? Have you sufficient imagination to picture it? Surely no penal servitude behind bars ever equalled that! I was glad to leave and enlist. The war was then merrily humming. I saw service here in Africa for twenty months, then got crocked up-properly smashed. Piece of shrapnel in the head, bone of leg splintered just below the knee. I was in hospital some months—they didn't X-ray the leg at first and didn't realize facts until a piece of bone worked out. I was on crutches for seven months and on canes for months more. I've only recently got over the limp, which probably saved my life.

"As a war victim I had several jobs offered me. I accepted one in a stockbroker's office, and found my utility. In spite of some rises and declines in my fortunes I am pretty well fixed to-day. Good salary and good opportunities for investments on inside information.

"I wanted to wait till I could write you the above line—'pretty well fixed.' I've not yet got the nerve to write Aunt Felicity, because I've developed—during the war—that nasty, prickly thing—a conscience.

"I may give myself the pleasure of a visit to England and fetch along the thousand I dropped at Newbury, to give Aunt Felicity a pleasant surprise. It would be immensely diverting to enact the rôle of Prodigal Nephew. Do you think she'd give me a welcome?

"In looking back I seem an unconscionable ass to myself. What in the deuce did I want to flounce off into space like that for? I don't know. It evidenced a tragic sort of innocence and ignorance of the world. I've learned the difficulty of forcing the world to support one. I wouldn't have the courage to do it all over again now. It's as a fair lady, with her third husband, said to me the other day: 'If a woman is going to get a divorce, let her get it in her youth. She won't have the courage after forty.'

"I'm only barely twenty-six, but my nerve's gone. So if I come home be prepared to see a very much tamed and commonplace edition of the former me.

"I've always felt I could count on you, Polly. You've been a sort of spirit level to me—in thought—all the way through. Perhaps you'll drop me a line. Keep my secret until I give you permission to tell Aunt Felicity, or until I write that I'm coming.

"I wonder if you're married by now. I'm sending this in care of Grandmother Beverly, because I somehow feel you are in Virginia.

"I didn't know how deucedly lonely I am till I began to write this letter. I miss you awfully and Aunt Felicity too. She was a brick, after all.

"And Celia? Jove! but I behaved shabbily there. I hope her affection for me was only puppy love, as mine for her undoubtedly was.

"Well, perhaps luck will be with me, and I'll soon see the cliffs of dear old Blighty again.

"Heaps of love and no end of good wishes from your affectionate brother, Monty."

Polly shivered. She threw a dressing-gown about her. Suddenly she burst into tears and laid her head down on the desk.

A rap sounded.

Polly, the letter crushed in one hand, opened the door.

Jerry stood outside, his face beaming with expectation.

Polly stared at him as one seeing a ghost. Was he or was he not the Monty who had written the letter she held?

Jerry had intended to say, "We must hurry, if we're going to catch the train," but the words froze on his lips as he saw Polly's tear-filled eyes, white face, and dressing-gown.

"Polly! What's wrong?" he asked anxiously.

Polly, more than ever torn by conflicting emotions, gazed at him searchingly.

"I can't go with you," she said brokenly. "I'm not well—don't question me—just go—please go—"

Jerry turned miserably away and went down the stairs.

CHAPTER XXV

JERRY flung himself into a third-class smoking compartment. The only other occupant was engrossed in The Western Morning News.

Jerry was glad Trevorrow had driven over to Penzance. He didn't like Trevorrow at any time. He would have especially disliked him this morning.

He had at last convinced Miss Felicity of the incompetence of her temporary steward. He had persuaded the little lady to insert an advertisement for a trained man. Then Jerry had had the pleasure of breaking the news to Trevorrow that he must be prepared to abdicate the stewardship and return to his former sphere of carpenter, plain and simple. That had been yesterday. Jerry flushed angrily as he recalled the man's sullen silence, the Cornish lower class inscrutability, the eloquent sneering twist of the upper lip. He would probably give notice. So much the better. It would be difficult for him to fill a subordinate position now. Jerry longed to make a clean sweep of Trevorrow, Stevens senior, and Stevens junior. The men seemed to sense his disapproval and lapsed into aloof silence on his approach. They probably called him "furrener" and then spat, the moment his back was turned.

"Dam' 'em!" thought Jerry. "With their primitive instincts they probably sense that I don't 'belong' to be here."

A bruising realization came to him of his unpopularity. "I don't seem to be a howling success as a fascinator. So far as I can see, Aunt Felicity and Wiggs

are the only ones who give a hang about me. Sir Wilfred apparently likes me—but that's because he thinks I'm Monty Trevider. Celia is antagonistic and Polly is indifferent. Paynter accepts me, but everybody else on the place resents me as a sort of Mr. Butinski and Citizen Fix-it."

What could be the matter with Polly? Was she really ill? Why was she crying? Did all women cry when they felt ill? Then Jerry remembered having been subconsciously aware that she had held a crushed letter in her hand. Good God! Was Polly in love—in love with some other man? Was that letter from a lover?

Jerry suddenly experienced all the inquisition of jealousy. A vain man is never jealous. Jerry was painfully modest and distrustful of himself. He could see no earthly reason why any woman should love him, every reason why she should love another.

He gave such a tremendous and heart-rending sigh that it gave the impression of being a variety of groan. The man opposite looked up from his paper with a cold stare. It was so un-English to give public vent to the private emotions. The man decided that his travelling companion was undoubtedly a foreigner. He resumed his reading behind a paper which was now held up in the form of a barrier, behind which the reader could be and feel enormously and disapprovingly English.

And this was to have been their day—Polly's and his. Jerry hadn't known how much he had counted on the joy of a day spent uninterruptedly with Polly until he had to face it alone.

It promised to be a beautiful day, of the pallid Cornish variety. The sun had the aspect of a shy debutante, only suggesting the ripe fullness to come.

The sea was the palest of silver-greys. The sky a

pearl warmed with a flush left over from the late sunrise. The sands were blanched to a bluish tint.

In the all-pervading pallor of sea and sky and land, a viridian patch of broccoli appeared overbold in colour, out of value.

Jerry found himself thinking that each day, with its transition from morn to noon, its drift from noon to afternoon, and its decline to evening, was symbolical of life. There was comfort, however, in the knowledge that after all, frequently the loveliest time of the day was the restful period which came with and after the sunset. His own high noon of life was a stretch of glaring perplexities and unendurable miseries. Perhaps the evening of the years would bring compensation, understanding, and peace. He realized that this trend of thought held little of the characteristics of youth. It was rather imbued with the tired qualities of middle age. Jerry felt himself old, almost beaten.

St. Michael's Mount loomed up a dark, detailless, magical form against an opaque sky. It challenged Jerry's attention and held it spellbound for a moment. The castle was perched just as one's childish imagination had built fairy castles to fit into the stories of Hans Andersen and Grimm. But the beauty of it hurt, as all beauty must, when seen alone. Oh! if Polly were only with him. . . .

Arrived in Penzance, he followed the other traveller's trail up Market Jew Street. He was to meet Trevorrow near the Davy Statue. Yes, there he was waiting him on the kerb.

Jerry had exchanged only a few words with the carpenter when his voice was drowned by the sudden honk of a motor-horn of the worst new variety, counterfeiting an attack of membranous croup.

The driver of the car glanced toward the pavement. He saw Jerry. From his eye flashed a look of incredulity, surprise. He turned the car toward the kerb a little farther down the street, brought it to a stop, helped the ladies to descend, and made for the spot where Jerry and Trevorrow had been standing. They had just left and were walking past the market house.

Jerry was brought to a halt by the greatest shock

he had ever experienced.

"Jerry Middleton! Well, of all the unexpected meetings! Who'd have thought of finding you here at the tip end of nowhere?"

Jerry saw the look on Trevorrow's face, a sort of

malicious glee mingled with astonishment.

He pulled his own expression and wits together in record-breaking time. Assuming the cold English stare with which he had become so familiar, he wheeled and faced the man who had accosted him.

He recognized a fellow-countryman, an American journalist, one Louis Wells, who had fought with him, been his "buddy," in fact, during the early years of the war in the *Légion Etrangère*. Wells had got transferred to the American section, after his country had entered the war, and, so Jerry had heard, done great work as a war correspondent.

Wells, unaffected by the English stare assumed by Jerry, slapped his old pal resoundingly on the shoulder and cried:

"Well, I'll be damned! Funny, contracted little world we live in. . . . Well, how goes it, Middleton? Can't you give a fellow a paw?"

"I'm sorry," said Jerry icily, "but there's evidently some mistake." He reached in a breast-pocket, extracted a card from a case, and extended it to the puzzled but not-to-be-dampened Wells.

Mr. Wells read the name of "Mr. Norman Montagu Trevider," and looked up quizzically.

"What's the joke?"

"There is no joke. I merely presented you my card, with my regrets that I do not chance to know you." He achieved the word "chance" with an English intonation which caused him no little pride.

"Well, I am damned!" said Mr. Wells.

Trevorrow was standing by, all eyes and ears. Jerry was agonizingly aware of this audience. He forced himself to maintain a calm, and nonchalantly took a cigarette from his case, without asking Mr. Wells to have one. He struck a match and lit his cigarette with studied deliberation.

"As I said," remarked Mr. Wells, "I'm good and goddamned. I'd have sworn on a stack of Bibles as high as the Woolworth Building that you were an American—one Jerry Middleton who fought like hell beside me in France—who got hit by the same shell. Good Lord! I can't be mistaken. This world isn't full of twins. You're sure you're not guying me—that it's not a gag of some sort?"

"Really!" said Jerry. "You surely don't expect me to exhibit the marks of my underwear, do you? Will the monogram on my cigarette-case afford you any comforting reassurance as to my truthfulness?"

He held out the case bearing the initials "N. M. T." "The drinks are on me," sighed Mr. Wells. "You'll surely let me set 'em up, won't you?"

"Rather!" said Jerry. He felt the utmost relief at the opportunity presented for terminating the intolerable triangle of which Trevorrow formed the most rasping point.

"I'll meet you in half an hour at the statue," said he to the carpenter. "In the meantime, you might get the garden tools for Stevens. You can select them without my help." Trevorrow turned on his heels without responding. He didn't remember to tip his cap.

"The ladies will want to poke about the curiosity shops," said Wells, "so I'm free for the time. But, my George! I can't get over your not being my old chum, Middleton. As like as two peas and some more. Never heard of such a coincidence. It's like some blasted picture stunt. Here's my card. Wells is my name. Business: pushing the pen. What's yours?"

"Haven't any," said Jerry.

"Just live?" asked Wells in stupefaction.

"Yes, just live," sighed Jerry, "and that can be a jolly hard profession at times, you may be sure."

"Jolly hard!" Wells repeated, with a roar of laugh-

ter.

"Now you've convinced me! Convinced me as all your pasteboard and engraved monogram couldn't, My Jerry Middleton couldn't have said that to save his blasted neck. No, not to save himself from being shot. Here we are." The had reached *The Western*.

"Now we'll wet our whistles and drink to the health of my old chum, Jerry Middleton, wherever that poor devil of a twin may be."

And so Jerry had the pleasure of drinking to himself. He had never drunk so sincerely to any health before.

"Happiness; and may fate be kind to him," he said as he touched his glass to that of his old friend.

"Well," said Wells, putting his glass down after the third emptying, "you've given me a rare jolt. I'll have to work it up into a yarn—case of mistaken identity. Hope you'll look me up if you're in London, Mr.——"

"Trevider," supplied Jerry.

"These Cornish names are sure some tonguetwisters," said Wells. "Well, Mr. Trevider, I hope we'll meet again. I'll be in London for several months. A line to the Authors' Club will always find me."

They walked back rather silently to the market house. Trevorrow had not yet returned. Jerry felt glad of a few moments' respite.

"So long," said Wells, and held out his hand. Jerry grasped it with an almost Coolie-like violence. He held it a trifle overlong. He hated to let go.

"So long," he said, and was aware of a slight huskiness and tremulousness in the tone.

Wells swung off. He turned when a short distance away and waved a hand.

Jerry stood watching the receding figure of the only old friend he probably had in all England. His heart was leaden. He found himself wondering just what he might have done had not that infernal Trevorrow been present. He believed he would have confessed himself to be Jerry Middleton. He could have risked being himself for one half-hour. There would have been small chance of it leading to any complication. Oh! to have just been himself for one blessed restful minute. . . .

He thought of all the things he might have said to Wells. How they could have relived the old days in France! What reminiscences might they not have revelled in! He thought of all the questions he might have asked. Wells had probably kept in touch with a lot of their old pals. His breast ached with a longing for news of old friends.

He was curbing a mad desire to sprint after Wells, to catch him before he had passed for ever beyond reach, to seize him and shriek in his ear, "I am Jerry Middleton. For God's sake stay with me for a while. I am so darned lonely."

But the body of Jerry stood rigidly immobile.

Trevorrow approached. Jerry went forward to meet him. He pushed the thought of Wells from him and reminded himself of the peach and grape houses for Aunt Felicity. He had again become the pseudo Monty Trevider.

CHAPTER XXVI

Polly spent a day of mental pandemonium. She had read the letter from her brother over and over. By noon she had still no sense of certainty, conviction. Had it been written by this Monty? It sounded like the old Monty; it did not sound like the new one. She reminded herself of the abnormalities which might naturally result from the illness or accident which had caused loss of memory.

There was one fact which couldn't be got over. This Monty had called her by name, recognized her the moment he saw her. That surely was conclusive proof that he was her brother.

If then this was the real Monty, what had become of the thousand pounds he had said he was bringing to restore to Aunt Felicity? Then she remembered that Aunt Felicity had drawn her attention to the statement in the newspaper that only twopence had been found on him, and the theory of the police that he had been the victim of robbery and violence.

Yes, her poor brother had probably been assaulted because of that thousand pounds; no doubt some blow on the head had been responsible for the loss of his memory.

"But," thought Polly, "I've never felt perfectly certain that this Monty is my Monty. Doubts came to me within ten minutes of our meeting. Why should I alone have doubted? Why couldn't I have had the same conviction every one else had?"

It was a long time before Polly began to realize-

and then with something very like consternation—that she didn't want to believe that the Monty, now in Penzance, was her brother. Why? She sat up stiffly and tried to turn the searchlight of investigation on her secret self. Why, she asked herself squarely, would she feel immensely relieved and vastly happier if it could be proved that the real Monty was at this moment in Johannesburg?

"It isn't because I don't like this Monty. I like him—very much. Then why?"

Polly was unaware of the fact that she had used the word "like" instead of the more natural one "love." There was some feminine instinct which checked each attempt she made to honestly get at the psychology of her feeling for Jerry.

If, by chance, it developed that the genuine Monty was in South Africa, what then was to be done with the stranger whom Aunt Felicity had claimed as her nephew? Would he have to be thrown out into the world, homeless, devoid of memory of his past, friendless, penniless? At this thought Polly involuntarily put her hand to her heart. Oh! that would be terrible—terrible.

No, she liked him far too much to have any share in bringing such a cruel misfortune upon him.

She was glad Monty had asked her to keep his letter a secret. She believed she would have kept her lips sealed, anyway. Fate, unassisted by her, must solve the riddle. Not a word would she utter to Aunt Felicity upon her doubts. Not a doubting look henceforth at the so-called Monty.

Supposing he did turn out to be some one else, it was not his fault, poor thing, that he was here. He hadn't claimed to be anybody. He couldn't help himself when Aunt Felicity took possession of him. He had been as helpless as a lost puppy or kitten which

some one had decided to adopt without so much as saying, "By your leave."

If he turned out to be a spurious Monty, then it would certainly be up to Aunt Felicity and herself to compensate him somehow for all the trouble and embarrassment they would have been instrumental in bringing upon him.

The more she defended Jerry in her own mind, the more Polly became aware of her tenderness toward the object of her defence. She eventually realized what a void would be made in her own life should the man, whom Aunt Felicity so unquestionably accepted as Monty, be forced to leave Tolvean for ever.

"Which all proves," thought Polly, "he *must* be the real Monty. I couldn't feel so wretched at the thought of losing him if he were a total stranger. If he were no relative I'd not care a straw what became of him. But there you are—I do care—care terribly much."

Then she thought of the indisputable resemblance to her brother—the unmistakable Trevider features. Monty had always resembled poor Uncle Cecil more than dear papa. The portrait of Uncle Cecil in the hall could have passed for a painting of Monty at fifteen. And this Monty found in London had the same engaging smile, the same tilt of the eyebrow, the same dip of hair in the centre of his forehead.

In spite of such deductions and her enforced faith in the identity of Jerry as her brother, Polly, several times during the day, had an almost irresistible impulse to answer the letter from Johannesburg. She, however, restrained herself. To write would be to confess to herself that she actually believed Monty to be on the other side of the world. That would be utterly disloyal to this Monty.

She'd be awfully kind and affectionate to him when he returned this evening from Penzance. She'd make up to him for the disappointment she'd given him this morning. She'd prove to herself her perfect faith in him, her conviction that he was her brother.

So it was she kept all doubts at bay, during tea with Aunt Felicity, and she decided to put on her prettiest frock—the one she had worn the evening of her return—to make herself especially pretty for her own dear brother that evening.

She was combing her hair when, after a hurried knock, Paynter bustled in, her ruddy face ruddier than usual and her hands thrown up in the exclamatory gesture which, with her, usually preluded the detailing of some tremendous piece of gossip, or the announcement of a household calamity.

"Lord! Miss Polly," she exhaled excitedly, "'ee should see Mr. Wiggs!"

"Wiggs?" asked Polly.

"Yes'm. Eye black, green, blue—a proper rainbow, I can tell 'ee. But that be nothing as to'ow Trevorrow do look. 'Ee ought to see he."

"What's the matter? Has there been an accident?" Polly queried.

"Accident! No'm. Just a plain proper fight. Mr. Wiggs just struck out at Trevorrow an' nearly scat 'is skool abroad, an' when Trevorrow rose up agin 'e made fer Mr. Wiggs's eye and closed it, but Mr. Wiggs could still see with the other eye and 'e struck and laid Trevorrow out as flat as a kippered herrin'." Paynter broke off to blow her nose and chuckle in her handkerchief. "It were a sight to cure sore eyes. Trevorrow ain't got manners—never takes the trouble to scrape 'is feet afore comin' in the kitchen—trackin' the floor up with muck and doong. . . ."

"But," said Polly, "what in the world did Wiggs want to attack the carpenter for?"

"'Cause 'e be fer sayin' as 'ow the young master

wasn't 'imself, that 'e were an impostor. 'E only got that word out once when Mr. Wiggs silenced of 'im.'

"But why should Trevorrow dare say such a thing?" asked Polly, feeling a queer thumping in her breast.

"Well it do seem as 'ow, according to Trevorrow, a stranger walked up to the master in Penzance to-day and called him by some name what wasn't Trevider. I fergit what 'e said the name were. The carpenter pretends as 'ow the master give a start an' showed 'e recognized the name. But Mr. Monty then says as 'ow 'e never laid eyes on the stranger afore, an' didn't know what 'e be talking about. Trevorrow says 'e saw the master were lyin', an' then and there 'e brought out the word 'Impostor!' and Mr. Wiggs finished the sentence fer 'im with a blow."

Polly was lost in thought for a moment, then she said:

"I wouldn't disturb my aunt with any of these silly tales, if I were you, Paynter. It's all nonsense, of course, and Wiggs was very foolish to take any notice of what Trevorrow said. He's simply sore because he knows we are trying to get a new steward, and he probably thinks my brother is responsible for the change. Don't say anything to Miss Trevider, and see that the matter is dropped in the servants' hall."

"Yes'm, of course. I'll do jest as 'ee says, but, Lord! Miss Polly, Mr. Wiggs do look such a sight! an' 'e do belong to be a 'andsome sort of man, ordinary." Paynter took herself off, still bristling with unspent excitement.

Polly stood for a moment with her hands clasped behind her head. Over her face crept a warm colour, and to her lips came a soft smile. Intuition—feminine intuition had at last brought conviction! With that conviction came a curious sense of happiness and relief.

Forgetting that she had intended to dress at once

for dinner, she sat down at her desk, took out a sheet of paper, and wrote:

"DEAREST MONTY:"

She filled two sheets only. The letter expressed the delight she had felt on hearing from him again, her unchanged affection, and her hope that she would soon see him in England. Not a word did she write of the presence at Tolvean of the man whose footsteps she had just heard passing her door.

Polly's heart beat a little faster as she listened to the footfalls dying away. Another smile quivered over her lips.

The letter finished, it was put in an envelope, addressed to Johannesburg, and locked in the desk drawer.

Upstairs at that moment Jerry was confronting a remarkable-looking valet.

"What the deuce!" he exclaimed as he took in the disfigurement of Wiggs's countenance.

"A little accident, sir," said Wiggs. "Came in in the dark, and in stooping to mend the fire I unfortunately collided with the sharp corner of the overmantel."

"Hard luck," said Jerry sympathetically. "Must hurt like the very devil."

"No, sir, not at all," said Wiggs, "but I regret being such an unpleasant object to look upon."

Alice at that moment tapped at the door, and to Wiggs's surprise he was told that Miss Polly wished to see him in her room.

That young lady insisted upon personally bathing Wiggs's damaged eye with boracic acid. She would have put on a compress and bandage had not Wiggs respectfully but firmly rebelled. At the conclusion of

her attentions, Polly, to the embarrassment of Wiggs, attempted to slip a new, crisp pound note into his palm.

"No, miss—thank you, but I couldn't take it—really, Miss Polly, I couldn'. Not that I don't appreciate it, but . . ."

Polly didn't urge the note. Instead she said:

"Then may I shake your hand?"

Wiggs was so flabbergasted, his hand had been shaken before he had recovered his presence of mind. When he came to, Polly had vanished from the room and he was alone, staring down on a very lame right hand, which now somehow felt it had been canonized.

CHAPTER XXVII

Throughout dinner Polly had talked incessantly. Jerry looked up at her several times with a puzzled expression. Polly was not usually a chatterbox. When a normally reserved person babbled, it denoted purpose of some kind. It was a variety of camouflage.

He contrasted her over-emphasized evening gaiety with the tears of the morning. Again a wave of jealousy passed over him.

Each time he looked at her and she detected him looking, she quickly withdrew her eyes.

Jerry said but little. It had been a rotten day. The business in Penzance had consumed only a little over an hour. Trevorrow had then departed in the wagon for Tolvean. Jerry had tramped through the Morrab gardens and up and down the sea-front for hours, reliving over and over his brief encounter with Wells. He had eaten no lunch.

Dinner had been later than usual. The excitement and gossip of the kitchen staff over the Wiggs-Trevorrow fight had been delaying. Coffee was about to be served when a servant announced that Miss Boughton-Leigh and Mrs. Spankie were in the drawing-room.

"How nice of them to come over," said Miss Felicity.
"I seem to see so little of dear Celia these days. We'll have the coffee served in the drawing-room."

Polly found herself eyeing Celia with a new interest, in view of the letter she had that morning received, and the intuitive conclusion she had since two hours ago reached. She wondered what Celia would do

should she discover the real Monty was now in South Africa, and the supposed Monty was but a mysterious stranger dropped fortuitously into their lives, from an unfathomable sky.

Polly relived the episode of the engagement ring, and felt surprised that she was no longer pained by the evidenced lack of love between the affianced ones.

She observed that Monty chose the chair next to that of the beautiful Mrs. Spankie. Celia's attentions were engaged by Miss Felicity. Polly sat aloof, an interested yet preoccupied spectator.

She subtly felt an object in the call. Celia somehow looked loaded.

During a general pause in the conversation of the four, Celia asked Polly to play to them. Mrs. Spankie adored music.

Polly knew that Celia pretended to a musical discernment which only a Debussy could satisfy. She could surmise nothing of Mrs. Spankie's tastes. Aunt Felicity's were as yet still in the "Drink to Me only with Thine Eyes," Madam, will You Walk?" period. Jerry's were unknown, but hopefully counted on. She herself felt a desire for an expression of violence of colour and passion, and for the simplest of sentiments—perhaps even the sentimental.

She lifted the top of the baby grand as one would open a window for more air. She sat, keenly aware of the eyes and ears of Jerry concentrated upon her.

She psychologically measured his attuned, vibrant senses, even before she pressed her fingers down on those first hushed, sustained, painted chords of Josef Hofmann's "L'Orient et L'Occident." Her foot trembled on the pedal, her arms quivered with nerve tension, yet she had control of herself and played as she had never played before, sensing as she had not hitherto sensed the unbridled colour of the Orient, the camel

bells, the shrouded women, the riot of raw life, of love, and over all the impenetrable mystery of the East; and, too, she comprehended that sad presentment of the Occident—an effete Occident, anæmic in its over-civilization, attentuated by its culture, its ugly shams masked under a cloying sweetness, the greed of its nations disguised under a cry of righteousness. She was glad to leave its so badly veiled and easily divinable features and return to those few last notes which were like a remembered, haunting echo from the realms of the Prophet.

When she lifted her foot from the pedal and the vibrations of those last three inscrutable chords became stilled, she deafened herself to the banalities of praise from Mrs. Spankie and Celia. Her heart glowed with a knowledge of all that lay under Jerry's silence. He alone had been her audience. He alone had understood what she had seen and felt.

With a curious little smile, she was playing again, and again she was playing alone to Jerry, talking to him in a language known only to them two, of a land unknown to the others present.

She played "Way Down upon the Swanee River," "Dixie," and "Maryland, my Maryland."

Polly had that ineffable magic which can transfuse the simplest melody with charm and wistfulness.

Her fingers were playing upon every homesick chord in Jerry's being. He suffered with every note, yet dreaded the last tone of those songs so inexpressibly dear to a Southern heart.

Celia had begun to talk to Miss Felicity before "Maryland, my Maryland" was more than half finished.

Jerry winced and Polly looked up, met his eye for a second, and felt an electric spark go down her spine. "Thank you, dear. Thanks so much," said Aunt Felicity. "There is so much real music in those simple airs."

"Very sweet," said Mrs. Spankie. She had also said "Very sweet" to Hofmann's overwhelming tone painting. She'd probably say "Very sweet" after Massenet's Elegy, thought Polly.

Aunt Felicity turned to Jerry. "Monty, Celia wants to borrow *The Saint*, by that unpronouncable Italian author. He begins with F. Won't you be so good as to get it from the library?"

Jerry rose, glad of an opportunity for a moment's escape.

"I'll go with you to hunt for it," said Celia.

Polly thought: "I knew it. She came for a purpose." To Mrs. Spankie she said: "And how do you like our Cornwall?"

Celia apparently forgot her desire for the book the moment she reached the library, for she flung herself down on a chair and blurted out:

"I had to trump up an excuse—make an opportunity to see you alone, Monty. There are things I must say, no matter how much they will hurt. I can't go on another day like this—living this horrible farce."

Jerry got out his cigarette-case, offered it to Celia, lit both cigarettes, and then sat down

"Yes?" said he interrogatively.

"I mean about our engagement."

"What about it?"

"That I can't endure it another hour—living this lie. I don't love you—there's the long and short of it. It has become more evident to me every day of our engagement. We are not interested in the same things, you—we don't understand each other, we haven't a thought in common. We once had, but I've changed—you've changed. I don't want to say anything unpleas-

ant, Monty, but I must say I could never he happy with a man whom I consider utterly materialistic."

"Yes?" said Jerry, as he watched a smoke ring he

had unintentionally achieved.

"Our hands were forced. We were flung into the thing unfairly. Don't think for a moment I'm blaming poor dear mama. I understand her point of view perfectly. She was thinking only of my happiness. She thought my future happiness lay with you. She was judging me by my silly girlhood. She couldn't realize how much my ideals have changed. I didn't realize it myself until put to the test by this engagement. It has grown more and more unendurable. I'm sure mama would be the first to want to rescue me from a lifelong wretchedness—to undo the unhappiness which she in her mistaken love of me has brought about.

"But it has been so difficult to know what to dowhat I ought to do. I've felt so chaotic. And I felt I had no one to turn to for advice. Father wouldn't understand. He would only be horrified. He would tell me I am being disloyal to my mother's memory, dishonourable to you. I felt I must talk to some one, and I have."

Celia did not go into the details of her own psychology during the past week. She did not delineate the effect upon herself of the ever-growing interest, evinced by Mr. Coolie, in the soul of that beautiful pauper, Mrs. Spankie. She ignored her own realization of the necessity of diverting interest Spankieward by a concentration of it upon herself. Mr. Coolie had observed that Celia was nervous, depressed.

"I have talked it over frankly with a friend," said Celia to Jerry, "and as a result I have come over tonight to end it all."

"Yes," said Jerry.

"Mr. Coolie had seen that I was not myself, that I

had something on my mind. He said I seemed depressed. I felt at last that I could unburden myself to him, that he alone would be in a position to advise me disinterestedly and with spiritual clarity. I told him everything—all my doubts as to my duty—my duty to mama, father, and you, and he has cleared away all fogs. I now see clearly. He has made me realize the crime of giving oneself where one cannot give one's soul. No duty, he tells me, is above that of being true to oneself, and that I could never be if I entered into a loveless marriage with you. Mr. Coolie called it the 'unholy state of matrimony.'

"He saw so clearly—realized all I had suffered and showed me the path to follow fearlessly. He has even offered to try to make father see things in a sensible light."

Here Jerry interrupted. "I wouldn't let him do that, if I were you. I'd better explain the matter myself to Sir Wilfred. On that point I must insist. Rest assured no blame will be attached to you."

"If you insist . . ." agreed Celia. "And you're sure you understand, Monty?"

"Better than you do yourself," said Jerry.

Celia looked worried. She fidgeted her hands. "I'm so afraid of father—afraid of his anger. He will be furious, you know—furious! Don't you think, after all, we'd better not tell him immediately? When he comes down for the Christmas holidays will be time enough—don't you think? And Miss Felicity—need she be told yet for a time?"

"Certainly not, if you prefer. Then am I to understand that outwardly we are still engaged—that with the exception of us two and Mr. Coolie every one else is to suppose the relation still exists?"

"That's just what I wanted to propose," said Celia;

"though if you want to make a confidante of Polly, I've no objection. You see, I've made one of Mr. Coolie." "Thanks."

"And now"—Celia was fumbling with her finger—"I can't keep this—I can't wear it—you must take it back. I've loathed it since the first moment I saw it. It has burned my finger every second like the white-hot link of a chain." She held out the circlet of diamonds.

Jerry accepted the ring unemotionally and held it abstractedly in the tips of his fingers.

"I hope I haven't hurt you, Monty."

"Don't worry about me," begged Jerry.

Celia got up. "I suppose for effect I'd better take the book."

Jerry went to the shelves and got it.

"Now don't offer to see me home. We came over in Charon, and we're going back by the high road. So I'll say good-night now. I suppose you'd naturally rather be alone for a time. I'm awfully sorry, Monty, but you'll buck up, won't you?"

"Yes, oh yes!" said Jerry as he shook hands and held the door open.

He returned to his chair and sank into it with a sigh of unutterable relief.

"Thanks be to all the unknown gods that I'm not condemned by a devilish fate to a life sentence of marriage to that woman!" thought he. "And blessings be on the head of the sly Coolie. May Heaven reward him—with Celia herself."

He sat long, his eyes fixed with a hypnotic stare upon the sparkling stones, as he abstractedly turned them this way and that.

He was not aware that the door had softly opened. He did not hear the light footsteps behind him, yet he suddenly felt eyes were upon him. He turned and was confronted by Polly. She had seen the ring. There was now no use to hide it. He held it up in wordless explanation of the meaning of Celia's interview with him.

Polly sat down in a chair near him, her eyes fixed on the glittering stones.

After a long, thought-laden silence Jerry asked:

"What does a fellow do with a returned engagement ring?"

"I don't know," said Polly. "Poor, beautiful, despised thing!"

"One can't return it to the jeweller, I suppose. It would be second-hand. I can't pawn it. I don't want to throw it in the fire—besides, Aunt Felicity's money paid for it."

Polly leaned over, her hand dangling over her knee. Her eyes burned upon the rejected ring.

"There should be homes for abandoned engagement rings," said she softly.

"Would you give the poor outcast a home, Polly?" asked Jerry in a voice scarcely audible.

Polly only breathed "Yes."

Jerry lifted the dangling right hand and with very unbrotherly thoughts and tremulous touch slipped the ring over the slim fourth finger. They both steadfastly kept their eyes fixed on the ring. Polly's hand rested in Jerry's. Slowly he lifted it to his lips and kissed the ring and the finger it encircled.

He retained the hand in his own. "It must be our secret, Polly—Celia doesn't want her father and Aunt Felicity to know as yet that the thing is off."

"Then I can wear it only at night—in bed," said

Polly, with a look of disappointment.

"Yes, but I can put it on each night, can't I? I'll rap twice on your door and say 'Dixie' for the password, and you'll come out and I'll slip it on with a wish, and you'll sleep with it. . . ."

Polly was still sufficiently childlike to love anything that seemed like a game.

"Oh, that will be fun! Now I must go to bed." She

tried to draw her hand away.

Jerry was raising it slowly toward his neck. "Why don't you ever put your arms round my neck any more, Polly?"

Polly was keeping her arm rigid. It did not rise higher than his breast. She made no answer.

"Mayn't I kiss you good-night?"

The door opened and Aunt Felicity entered. They sprang apart like surprised lovers.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE three weeks which followed were outwardly uneventful, the inmates of Tolvean having only the outer aspect of leading the placid, happy life of a normal English country family.

Inwardly, for two of the dwellers in that majestic, ivy-covered, old grey stone house, the days were anything but placid and commonplace.

To Polly each day was one of nervous tension. She was awaiting confirmation of her intuitions. She counted the days off on a calendar. Pretending that she had some shopping to do in Penzance, she had gone over there on Monday, the 10th November, and posted the letter to Johannesburg. It would be past the New Year before she could get a reply. How could she ever, ever endure the suspense of the weeks which must intervene? Yet had she any uncertainty deep in her heart? Yes, at times her mind still fluctuated between conviction and doubt. It was so difficult to be sure.

. . . Perhaps she was influenced only by her desires

now—her ardent hope that Monty was really in South Africa. Why should she so suddenly desire to prove the supposed Monty to be an unknown outsider? Polly's virginity of soul protected her from a realization of her own heart's secret.

The presence of even a fraction of doubt, uncertainty, naturally held her emotions in check, and gave all her relations with Jerry an anomalous character, both difficult and painful.

What she felt toward Jerry, her realization of the strange emotions he stirred within her, his power over her happiness, her peace of mind, must—should no letter arrive from South Africa—be accounted for by supposing her affection for her brother to have been curiously intensified by that long six years' separation, for she recognized that her love for this "Monty" transcended in quality and quantity all affection she had hitherto experienced for any one. One did sometimes hear of extraordinary devotion between sister and brother; one read in books of the most beautiful sacrifices resulting from such love.

On the other hand, if she did get a reply from Johannesburg and this "Monty" turned out to be a total stranger, what then? Here Polly's thoughts always stopped short, as if brought up by a peremptory halt, sounding from the very depths of her being.

There was now another curious fact to face. There was just one minute in every day which really counted, for which all the hours of the day seemed merely the overture—the moment when each night "Monty" paused outside her door and tapped twice. Polly would then hand forth the "fairy ring," as she called it, and Jerry would silently slip it over the fourth finger of her right hand, then rest his lips upon it, as with closed eyes (visioning a wistful dream) he wished the beautiful wish.

One night Polly had laughingly said: "If all your wishes for me are magicked true by the fairy ring I would think I'd be smothered under a shower of blessings and treasures."

"But perhaps I always wish the same wish," confessed Jerry.

"Do you?"

"I said perhaps." Jerry gave that queer engaging

smile, which always made Polly feel as if her heart were a motor being run full speed uphill.

To Jerry, too, the whole day crescended to that moment of bedtime, when on the threshold of Polly's room he seemed on the threshold of heaven itself.

With Celia weeded out of their paradise, Polly and Jerry lived in a sublime isolation, in which they were but dimly aware of the presence of even the beloved Aunt Felicity. She now held in their fairy palace of love the position which some exquisite, treasured old piece of furniture might have held. If that piece of furniture had been removed, they would have realized it instantly and would have suffered a grief-stricken sense of loss.

Their self-absorption was only the divine but selfish concentration of love, a concentration which blots out everything except the personality of the beloved.

Miss Felicity was not selfish, which was remarkable in one devoid of imagination, devoid of the power to put oneself in the place of another. And she had lived too much alone with her many responsibilities and absorbing domestic interests to be ever consciously lonely.

When it occurred to her one day that Polly and Monty so rarely shared their plans and time with her, she only sighed happily and thought, "Dear children! They are so devoted to one another."

She had ceased to worry actively over the delayed restoration of her nephew's memory. The dear boy was so adorable, so dependable, so improved in every way. She could scarcely in reason desire a complete restoration of his former self. She knew that Dr. Baragwaneth was still seeing him from time to time, and was now treating him for general anæmia.

Miss Felicity could not attempt to understand the complicated workings of the human body. The procedures of the medical profession were to her a pro-

found and awe-inspiring mystery, but she tried to elucidate Dr. Baragwaneth to Polly.

"He seems to think," said she, "that Monty's lost memory may be due to an insufficient supply of something to some part of the brain—this lack being due to what he calls anæmia. Once overcome the condition, build up the body, enrich the blood, and, lo and behold! the brain, properly fed, may regain all its lost power."

Polly listened and tried to understand. Suppose, thought she, he regains his memory and finds he is married. She grew so suddenly pale, in contemplating this horrible possibility, that Aunt Felicity asked anxiously if she felt faint. "You must have a sip of sherry at once."

"Oh, aunty," laughed Polly, "don't you know 'feeling faint' went out of fashion æons ago? Nobody faints nowadays except on the stage, in the cinema, and in novels."

Yet it was just a week from that day, on Tuesday, the 2nd of December, that Polly did feel faint—as faint as any early Victorian lady. At breakfast, Jerry had proposed to Polly that they should have a good long walk instead of the usual morning ride.

It was what Polly called a "shade-shine day"—a day of constant surprises of light and shadow, of occasional, tempestuous, shortlived showers and glorious after outbursts of sun. The great bowl of sky seemed a huge canvas on which some masterly painter had achieved the most dramatic effects. Great purplish-grey clouds reared architectural battlements, tipped with lights and tints which one is accustomed to associate only with sunset glories, while between the huge, dark rolling masses one seemed to see infinitely far behind into a space of celestially clear robin's egg blue.

"It's a day to run, not walk," said Jerry, as he looked out from the dining-room window.

"To dance, you mean," said Polly, as she did a saturnalia round the table and out into the hall.

Jerry was just reaching for his cap, which he had yesterday flung down on the hall table, when Polly put out a hand.

"Don't," she begged. "To cover one's head on a day like this would be sacrilege. The wind in one's hair—oh! it will be maddeningly wonderful."

Jerry smiled, and putting up his hand rumpled his locks as if getting them loosened for the wind's sport.

He was standing immediately beneath the portrait of the boy in the Eton suit, with the engaging smile.

"Curious," said Polly, looking from one face to the other, "how singularly like that portrait you look just at this minute."

Jerry turned and looked up. "Fine little chap, isn't he? Who is he?"

"Uncle Cecil," said Polly.

"Where's he now?"

"Dead. Drowned in Australia. It was probably suicide, poor dear. Don't talk of him to Aunt Felicity," she hastily warned. "It's her one obsession. She was peculiarly devoted to him. She's always dreaming about him—has sort of nightmare dreams—says he's always trying to tell her something, and she always wakes up before he can say it. But come along. We're wasting precious time. I'll run you a race to the lodge."

They sped like two young fawns down the gravelled drive. Jerry had to exert all his powers to beat her, and then he reached the great gate of Tolvean only about five feet ahead. They stood laughing and panting.

"Where now?" asked Jerry.

"Don't let's plan," said Polly. "Perfunctory plans would be so out of place in this world of glorious abandon. I'll shut my eyes, whirl about like a Dervish, then whichever way I'm looking when I stop will be the direction we'll follow."

She whirled and came to a stop facing the wood

opposite the gate.

They climbed the stone hedge, passed through a copse, and came out on a hilltop, from which they could see, as Polly said, "across England." There was St. Michael's Mount, a grey spectre in the far distance on one side, a ghost sea behind it, and there far on the other hand was another wraith-like sea, probably somewhere near the Lizard.

Below them stretched a great checker-board of small fields, separated by hedges. It had a singularly

beautiful decorative quality.

"Nowhere can one see so far as in England," said Polly. "And it's so lovely, so dear, so somehow confiding."

Jerry was thinking, no matter what his fate, no matter how far the future might carry him, his heart would now be like the soil that enshrined the heart of Rupert Brooke, "for ever England."

It was a day which sounded a clarion call to all Nature's creatures. The birds felt it. There was a thrush down in the copse, singing as though practising the love-song he would sing in the early Cornish springtime, when the moors would be gold with furze, the hedges carpeted with primroses, the woods magical with bluebells—those wedding-bells of the birds.

Rabbits were to be seen on all sides, some sitting on their haunches, others scuttling toward a nearby patch of broccoli. The gulls, having deserted the sea for the time, played overhead, coasting down wind currents, tirelessly sporting with the care-free joy of children.

In a distant lane, far from home, they came across Celia's terrier, Dorothy Perkins, out for a hunt of her own. She, too, had answered the call of the day. She was overjoyed to abandon any private plans and become a party of three. She prettily pretended she had come out for the sole purpose of finding Jerry and Polly. For fear she had not made her delight over the encounter sufficiently convincing, she frequently deserted some fascinating scent to wheel about, leaping, and pawing them all over again. On returning again to pursue her trail, her enthusiasm of tail completed all her eyes and paws had left unsaid.

"She's a dear dog," said Polly.

"There might have been a different ending to my love-story had Celia been Dorothy and Dorothy Celia," laughed Jerry.

"I'm glad she wasn't," said Polly. "Celia would have made such an awfully supercilious dog. I'm sure she would have been a pug. Shall we get over the wall and investigate this wood? I've never been here before. We'll let Dorothy be our guide."

They were fringing a wood, the edges of which were a mass of aged rhododendrons of amazing height. Beyond rhododendrons they saw the tall tops of bare beeches.

Jerry climbed the crumbling stone wall and pulled Polly up. No bodily contact with her, however brief, failed to bring thrills of an ecstatic but troublesome quality. He had to help her down on the other side.

They instinctively avoided a perilous encounter of eyes.

They stood on chaotic ground. There were deep hollows filled with dead leaves and abrupt banks carpeted with matted dead branches. The myriad under-branches of the largest rhododendrons were dead from lack of sunshine. A twilight lay ever about their roots.

"It's like a haunted wood," said Polly.

"What a place for a criminal to hide—in that rhododendron thicket. Step carefully, Polly. I don't like the look of this ground. You'd think there'd been an earthquake here or some other upheaval."

"Say rather a caving in," said Polly, as her foot sank in the leaves of a hollow and she leapt to the bank beyond. "I believe we're among old tin mines—probably old Roman ones. Yes, look! there's an abandoned shaft." She pointed to a wide, irregularly round hole to their left.

Polly edged toward it to peer down.

Jerry grabbed her nervously by the arm. "Don't. Please don't—the ground looks treacherous—it might cave in. This is awfully risky business. I think we'd better clear out of here. You can't see what you're stepping on for this bracken, and the leafy rhododendron branches hang over so far, there's no telling what they're hiding. Come on, Polly, let's get out."

Polly assented. But where had the dog gone?

Jerry whistled. No Dorothy Perkins appeared. Jerry and Polly called and whistled repeatedly. They caught a distant sound of rustling, and the next moment a rabbit dashed past them. Quickly behind came the terrier, nose to earth.

Polly tried to catch Dorothy as she passed, but she slipped through her hands and was off like a streak of lightning.

Having gone round the far side of a large isolated

rhododendron the rabbit turned on its tracks and headed in their direction. It dashed toward a depression in the ground and disappeared from view under some bracken. Dorothy Perkins was now in full cry over the lost trail. They caught glimpses of her, turning excitedly this way and that, her nose sniffing the ground. A sudden joyous yelp announced she had rediscovered the scent.

She came flying along the course taken by the rabbit before it had disappeared, and reached the red-brown bracken under which the rabbit had apparently hidden. The dog's speed had not slackened, yet she passed under the bracken and did not reappear.

Jerry and Polly were unconsciously holding on to each other in their excitement over the chase. They now turned puzzled, questioning eyes one to the other.

"Where could she have gone?"

Jerry did not reply, but his eyes held an unspoken fear.

"Stand just where you are for a moment," said he. "Don't move."

Polly obeyed. Her heart began to sink with horrid misgivings.

Jerry walked carefully, pushing his stick into each clump of bracken and under the overhanging rhododendron branches. He reached the spot where the double disappearance had occurred. He pushed the bracken aside and bent over, looking down for what seemed to Polly an interminable time.

Jerry came back toward her, his eyes fully of misery. Polly understood before he spoke.

She whispered: "An old mine shaft?"

Jerry nodded in affirmation.

"Oh, what shall we do?" moaned Polly.

"That's what I'm trying to decide," said Jerry. "For I'm going to try to do something—save her, if there's a ghost of a chance."

CHAPTER XXIX

Hand in hand they approached the hidden death-trap.

As they passed near the brink of the shaft, to their ears came a faint sound of splashing water.

"Oh! it's Dorothy," cried Polly. "She's alive—still alive and swimming. What shall we do?"

Jerry was thinking hard. He knew that these long-abandoned shafts were generally filled with water of considerable depth. He had visions of the poor dog swimming and swimming round in a hopeless horrible circle until exhausted. He drew Polly carefully by the bracken and the branch of rhododendron which had hidden the shaft opening, to the other side. From there they had a good view of a circular hole of more than five feet span. The stones lining the shaft seemed quite intact near the top. Pushing Polly behind him, Jerry lay flat on his stomach and got his head over the edge.

At first he could distinguish nothing in the black void below; then as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and the wind blew the rhododendron branch to one side, he saw a glint of light on water below, far below. He could not calculate the distance.

The sound of swimming had so much the quality of splashing that Jerry knew the dog to be terrified or desperate.

He called down in a reassuring voice, "It's all right, old girl. Take it easy."

The sound in the water below ceased abruptly.

Polly shivered. Jerry felt a cold perspiration break out on his forehead.

"Dorothy!" he called. "Good old dog."

There was a pathetic response—half-whine and half-ecstatic bark.

"She's alive! Oh, Monty, she's alive!" cried Polly, as she flattened herself beside Jerry, calling down every term of endearment and encouragement she could think of.

Dorothy again sent up to them that wistful, whining cry.

"What can have happened?" asked Polly.

"Wait—I think I got a glimpse of something," said Jerry. "I think I see the glistening of light on a sort of spray. She must be standing on something and shaking herself. By George! I believe she has found a projection of some kind and has climbed up on it. If that's true, then . . ."

"Oh! could we save her?" Polly gripped his arm. "Of course we will," Jerry assured her. "First we must wait a minute or two and just listen. If she doesn't swim again and still replies to us . . ."

"Then what?"

"Then I'll get her out."

"How?"

"I don't know yet. I'm thinking."

They listened breathlessly, then called. A plaintive response came. There was no further sound of splashing water.

"Polly," said Jerry finally, "I must go and get help. I'll need a rope and some men. Will you go with me?"

"And leave her—leave Dorothy here all alone? Monty, I couldn't."

"All right. I understand. You can keep her spirit up and cheer her if any one can. I'll not be

gone long, but, dearest"—the word slipped over the brink of lip straight from his heart before he could curb it—"promise you'll be careful—that you'll not lean over an inch farther."

"You may trust me." Polly avoided his eyes.

Jerry got up and stood looking down on the prostrate form a moment with anxious, love-laden eyes, then turned his back and made his way quickly over the uneven ground through the wood.

It abruptly occurred to him that he didn't know the way back to Tolvean. They had come by devious unfamiliar lanes, across strange fields, guided by the whims of Dorothy Perkins. Jerry could only dash back down the last lane they had traversed, in the hope of meeting some one.

He presently saw a farmer in a field close by. Leaping the hedge, he hurried to him and briefly recounted the accident. The farmer's interest was unstirred.

"Dogs often falls into them old shafts," he commented fatalistically. "Two of the beagles went down in last week's chase. Ain't no use tryin' to do nawthen."

Jerry elaborated his determination to try to save Dorothy, and appealed to the farmer for advice and assistance.

"I'm too busy," he replied, and spat. "Better go down to the village and find a fisherman. What you need is some rope and a winch. But you'll have to pay a man a tidy sum to go down one of them holes. It's a tricky business."

"Where could I get a winch?" asked Jerry, feeling that every moment wasted was perhaps sealing Dorothy's doom.

"A ship belongs to have a winch. There be a sailing barque into the harbour—the Annie Walters. You might hire the winch offen 'er."

The farmer gave directions as to what fields to cross, what lanes to follow, then phlegmatically turned and took up his own interrupted thoughts and toil.

A half-hour later Jerry found the captain of the sailing-ship. Fortunately the skipper was a dog lover. He listened sympathetically. The enterprise appealed to him. He pointed out, however, the troublesomeness of unbolting the winch, and tried to think of some simpler method of rescue. "A gin, snatch-block, and rope would, I think, do the trick just as well. I'll lend you two of my men to help."

Jerry mentioned a handsome sum in payment, and the bargain was clinched. To hurry matters he went off in search of a cart and pony. Another twenty minutes were consumed before he and the two sailors were travelling up over the hills.

The trip seemed endless, the pony a tortoise. Jerry became a prey to a thousand sickening forebodings. What an ass he'd been to leave Polly there alone in that damnable place. Suppose she had edged over too far. . . . Suppose the supports of some old mine passage far below had given way. . . . He was in a fever of misery and anticipation of calamity. He had almost forgotten Dorothy in his agony of fear for Polly's safety.

The cart had to be brought to a halt in the lane skirting the wood. While the men were hitching the pony, Jerry clambered over the wall and dashed without any precaution toward the spot where they had stood when they saw the rabbit disappear.

"Polly!" he called, unable to wait until he would

reach a place from where she might be visible.

"All right!" The sound of her voice brought such a sense of relief, Jerry felt his legs go weak and he sat down suddenly.

In another half minute he was beside her, his recent agony of apprehension still writ in his eyes and pallor of cheek. "Thank God you're safe!" he breathed.

"Everything's all right," said Polly, avoiding his eyes. "Dorothy barks now—doesn't wail any more. We've both been as cheerful as could be. Did you succeed in getting help?"

"Yes; and I must go back now to give a hand with the tackle. I had to find out first if you were safe. I'll be back in a jiffy. Oh! Polly, if you only knew——"

"Run along," she interposed. "Dorothy must be so tired, poor dear. It's been a long time."

It was a matter of only a few minutes before Jerry reappeared with the laden sailors.

The men went to work in a business-like way, making a gin of three spars over the opening of the shaft. From the centre of the tripod they swung the pulley over which the rope was passed.

When everything was ready one of the sailors turned to Jerry. "Well, boss, which of us do you want to go down 'er?"

"Neither," said Jerry; "I'm going down myself, of course."

Polly felt a queer quick throb of her heart, and there was a sudden catch in her throat, but she made no protest.

The sailor dislodged a quid of tobacco violently and said: "Excuse me, sir, but I was for taking you for a bloomin' toff. I beg yer pardon."

Jerry ignored the eulogy, flung off his coat, and asked them to arrange the rope.

They passed it round his body under the arms and made a bowline.

Jerry was ready for the descent. He was determined not to look at Polly. She, however, sped to

his side and seized his arm. He looked down for one brief moment in her eyes, and in that moment looked all the things he had so long hidden in his heart. And he saw—great heavens! what did he see? His senses reeled with the shock and bliss of the revelation. In Polly's eyes was that mystical something which is to be seen only in the eyes of a woman who loves.

"Polly!" he gasped huskily.

She bent her head and kissed the sleeve of his shirt. Then Jerry knew—knew the sublime truth.

She turned away. She hadn't the courage to see him disappear down that horrible shaft.

All her thoughts condensed into an agonizing prayer for his safety. She had forgotten the dog.

Jerry began his descent.

The men stood at some distance, paying out the rope. Jerry wished he had an electric torch. It was going to be dark down there. With his hands he tried to keep himself free of the sides. When he was down about twenty feet his foot struck a displaced stone projecting on the right side. He called up: "Could you keep me more toward the middle?"

The men made an effort. They swung him too far. The next moment Jerry saw stars. He had thought that expression a mere joke, up to then, but stars there were and a staggering pain. His head had collided with the sharp edge of the projecting stone. He put a hand up and found his hair wet, warmly wet. He felt horribly dizzy. He had a moment's impulse to cry up to them to haul him up, "but," thought he, "that would look as if I'm a quitter."

Down, down, down he went. His dizziness was increasing. The blood was now flowing over his face. He felt rather faint. Suppose he should start back up with Dorothy in his arms and get faint and help-

less. . . . If the ledge was wide enough to stand on, he'd rope her up and send her up first.

He called out, "Dorothy." A glad cry sounded near,

He called out, "Dorothy." A glad cry sounded near, below him. He dashed the blood from his eyes and tried to bend over to look. He was seized with such giddiness he would have fallen but for the rope's firm hold.

Summoning all his strength, he called up: "Go slow."

A few seconds more and Jerry, whose eyes had grown accustomed to the dark, saw a few feet below him the quivering-with-joy form of the terrier.

In order to reach her he'd have to let his feet and legs go down into the water. He shivered at the thought. The water was deathly cold. As it soaked through his trousers, it gave him a shock, then seemed suddenly to revive him. He felt mentally steadied.

"All right. That'll do."

"Stay still. Down!" he commanded the now wildly excited Dorothy, who was about to leap into space to reach him.

It would be necessary to get a pretty firm grip on her, for she was almost out of her mind with relief and delight.

"There, there, old girl! Steady, now." He reached forward and snatched her by the scruff of the neck, lifting her, as with the other hand he clutched the ledge, and bending down got a foothold. As he glanced at the water, less than a foot below the ledge, he involuntarily shuddered. Giddiness overcame him again, and he had to use his free hand to steady himself by the rope. He wiped his eyes clear of blood and put Dorothy down on the narrow space left by his feet, holding her there as he severely commanded: "Dead dog! Lie quiet, I tell you!" She lay motion-less and cowed.

He let go of her; both hands were required to get

the rope from around his own body and unfasten the bowline.

He tremblingly bent over, fully realizing his peril, and slipped the rope around the dog's body back of her forelegs. "It will pinch a little, Dorothy, but it means life and all that's good to a dog, so bear it like a woman." She was secured. He straightened up, feeling horribly weak and shaky. With great effort he steadied his voice and cried up:

"Heave away!"

Dorothy Perkins swung out and up over the water. During the first surprise she made no sound, then she began an uninterrupted series of sharp, protesting yelps.

When the terrier's head emerged from the top of the shaft, Polly gave a little cry. She had thought Jerry would bring her up in his arms. He hadn't said so, of course. . . . But he was down there still—down there unprotected by any hold of rope, on that narrow ledge. If he should make a wrong move. . . . If he should happen to slip. . . .

She couldn't wait for the men to lower the rope. Deaf to all the whimpers of delight of the dog and oblivious of its efforts to lick her hands, she pulled madly at the fastenings and got them loose. Pushing the eager nose of Dorothy aside, she turned, wildeyed, to the sailors.

"Get it down again—get it down quickly."

Then she leaned over as far as she dared, and with a world of yearning cried: "Monty-darling!"

"I'm all right," answered Jerry. "Don't get too near," he implored anxiously, as he again dashed the blood from his eyes and looked up at the small disk of sky overhead. He saw a star shining far above, and more than that, he saw *liberation!*

In a flash it came to him as clearly as if a voice had

spoken: the blow on the head had been delivered by Fate!

Here at last was the chance he had prayed for. Through this blow he could regain his lost personality—his own individuality and—perhaps eventually win Polly. . . .

CHAPTER XXX

Polly's eyes detected a splotch of blood on Dorothy Perkins's side.

Poor dog! She was probably hurt. But Dorothy's wounds could wait. The only thing in the world that mattered now was the safety of Monty. It had been a quixotic thing for him to do—to go down himself. One of the sailors could have done it just as well, probably better. In the mercilessness of her anxiety, she felt any accident befalling a mere sailor would have been immaterial.

Jerry had lost more blood than he realized. It was a nasty scalp wound which reached perilously near the danger spot of the temple.

Once he had reeled and almost fallen into the abysmal depths of water. After that experience he had carefully seated himself, letting his already soaking feet and legs dangle in the water till the rope came down. He managed to get it about his body in a very amateurish way.

It was when about half-way between the ledge and the top that Jerry fainted, and it was when Jerry appeared above the opening of the shaft that Polly, for the first time in her life, came very near fainting too.

Jerry was indeed a shocking spectacle. His face, with its closed, death-like eyes, was a gory blur, his shirt bespattered with crimson and his hands dyed red.

Polly gave a glance, uttered an animal-like wail, and put both hands over her eyes. She fought with all her strength to overcome her faintness and sickness. She must be strong. She must be able to help. With a shuddering of body she withdrew her hands from her eyes and forced herself to look at Jerry. All sense of horror departed. It was as if an asbestos curtain had descended between her and her emotions. She walked forward steadily, deaf to the voluble ejaculations of the sailors.

She bent over the form of Jerry, now stretched full length on a bed of bracken. She tenderly wiped the disfiguring blood from his face as well as she could. To think of all that water down there in the shaft. . . . If one only had a little of it now. She loosened Jerry's collar and raised his feet. She felt for his heart-beats. They seemed so faint, so far off. . . .

O God! if she should lose him now—now that she knew that what she felt for him was love—now that she knew she had a right to love him—now that she knew the blessed truth of his love for her.

She bent over him, her tears raining on his poor stained face, and as they fell she wiped away the mingled tears and blood gently with her handkerchief. Forgetting witnesses, she suddenly stooped and covered the unconscious face with kisses.

"Good job we've got the cart, miss," said one of the sailors. Said the other: "Better let us heave 'im up, lady. Wot 'e needs is a doctor."

Polly was brought to her senses.

In ten minutes they had got Jerry in the bottom of the cart, his head pillowed on Polly's lap. Dorothy Perkins sat in front with the sailors looking as smug and proud as if she realized herself the instrument of Fate.

They hadn't gone far when Jerry regained consciousness. He opened his eyes and found Polly looking down on him with an infinite tenderness and anxiety. He felt the jolting of the cart and surmised what had

happened. He smiled reassuringly, contentedly, and closed his eyes. As he did not reopen them, Polly leaned over and whispered: "Are you all right, dear?"

He opened his eyes and smiled again. "Yes,

perfectly happy."

He was tempted to try and plan what he should do, but it seemed such an awful effort. His head and the back of his neck ached so ridiculously. His teeth were chattering with cold. He felt absurdly weak and silly. Perhaps he had better postpone any attempt at serious thought until a later hour. The best thing at present was just to relinquish himself in the hands of others, to speak as little as possible, and enjoy to the fullest the inaction of brain and body which seemed so curiously comfortable. What did a little pain matter, if it brought him the incalculable blessing of having his head pillowed on Polly's lap?

Polly dreaded the arrival at Tolvean. She knew what a shock the sight of "Monty" would give Aunt Felicity. She must break the facts of the accident to her as gently as would be possible. She decided the best course was to drive to the rear of the house. Paynter could be counted on. She could keep Aunt Felicity out of the way until Wiggs and the sailors had got "Monty" upstairs.

The servants were, of course, aghast when the cart drew up at the tradesmen's entrance. They all but went off their heads.

Polly, with all her sweetness and gentleness, was possessed of a commanding quality and soon put an end to the excited outcries.

Wiggs, having been summoned, arrived, and, with the exception of a sudden pallor, evinced no perturbation. "Thank Heaven for one person with self-control!" thought Polly.

Dorothy Perkins, with not even a glance of apprecia-

tion, leapt from the cart and, as if feeling that the rôle appointed for her to play in this drama was now complete, turned tail and made for home.

While Miss Felicity was safely detained by Paynter in the drawing-room behind closed doors, the men carried Jerry upstairs—carried him in spite of his protests. He assured them he was quite able to walk.

Polly first telephoned Dr. Baragwaneth, then went to tell her aunt.

Aunt Felicity, in her turn, now grew so faint, Polly had to administer a little sherry. But for all the fluttering exterior, there was a warrior soul in that little Victorian body. Miss Felicity drew herself up to her full meagre height and declared she would go at once to her dear boy.

Polly, however, prevailed upon her to delay seeing him for a little. "He's such a sight, dearest. I'm sure it would make you quite ill, and, besides, Wiggs is probably undressing and bathing him now."

Miss Felicity agreed to wait until the doctor arrived. As it was, she did not see Jerry till the following day.

When Dr. Baragwaneth entered he found the patient in bed with his head bandaged in a remarkable fashion by Wiggs, who had felt not a little proud of his first-aid attentions.

"Doctor," said Jerry, "you once asked me if I remembered who Jerry Middleton was. I can answer that question now."

"Indeed," said the doctor. "But I wouldn't bother about such things at present. Let's have a look at the head first. Time enough for other matters later."

"But I want to talk," protested Jerry.

"And I want you to be quiet."

"If I'm not, what then?"

"But you will be," replied the doctor. "My patients obey me."

"You're not going to stick that dam' needle in me again," shouted Jerry. "If you don't give me your word of honour not to drug me, I'll get out of the bed this minute, and out of the house."

"I've no intention of giving you a sedative." The doctor was very patient. "I do, however, insist upon your calming yourself. Now let me get that rag off your head."

"But, remember," insisted Jerry, "I must keep all my wits about me, for I've got a lot to say. I want to say it to you, but especially to Au—Miss Felicity and Polly."

"Very well," said the doctor, "but you'll say it to-morrow. Now get it through your head, young man, that I'm in charge of this case."

Jerry resigned himself to the inevitable, and the doctor proceeded to examine the wound.

CHAPTER XXXI

JERRY did not sleep the early part of the night. His head was racked by an excruciating pain. He felt feverish, yet shivered with cold. Towards morning, however, he slept the deep sleep of exhaustion, and awoke miraculously free from pain and singularly clear-minded.

He had suffered too much during the night to attempt serious thought or to plan out any definite line of action.

His first sensation on awakening was a great gratitude to the doctor. He was overwhelmingly thankful that he had not been permitted to talk the day before. He would have made irretrievable blunders—blurted out the first impulsive words which might have come to the tip of his tongue. He now realized that the climax he was approaching required the most delicate handling, the most profound deliberation, finesse.

In the quietude and peace of the early morning, with a clear head free from distracting pain, he reviewed the situation and debated the alternatives—to tell the whole bald truth, or tell some truth and some lies.

He experienced an almost irresistible temptation to tell the whole truth. It seemed a procedure fascinatingly simple. The long deception he had been forced to endure made him passionately long to be for ever released from the shackles forged by lies.

He deliberately put the temptation from him, well knowing the cruel difficulties, the perhaps lifelong penance, he would be letting himself in for, did he mingle lies with truth.

The most compelling reason for this decision was, strange as it might seem, a punctilious consideration of others.

He had all along recognized the fact that Miss Felicity was devoid of imagination. She was wholly unfitted by breeding and personality to cope imaginatively with the raw facts of his story, to understand the challenge to chance he had made when he had walked out into Euston Road.

Did he tell the truth concerning his pretence of lost memory, his reasons for the acquiescent acceptance of her innocent mistake would be utterly incomprehensible to Miss Felicity's direct and simple nature, revolting to her sense of honour, unpardonable to her honest soul. Truth would cause her shock, disillusionment, and the cruellest unhappiness.

"If I selfishly square myself with my own conscience," thought Jerry, "I'll do it over the mangled heart of Aunt Felicity. That puts it in a nutshell."

To lie, and to have to continue to live that lie, to awake each morning and know oneself to be a liar, to go to bed every night knowing one must sleep with a liar, would require almost superhuman courage in one fundamentally honest; but Jerry believed he had the strength to do it, if the cause for which he was doing it were sufficiently vital to him. He, who had suffered the martyrdom which deception brings, knew only too well the secret woe to which he would be condemning himself.

He recalled once having read a book in which the adored wife, after four years of wedded trust and happiness, awoke one night, sat up in bed, and, by the light of a guttering candle, squared herself with her con-

science. She confessed to her husband that she had deceived him, she confessed she had never loved him, she confessed she had not had the right to don the virginal white at the altar.

Jerry vividly remembered his indignation when he had read that confession, how he had cried aloud, "The coward, the selfish coward!" He had felt that woman to be no less a criminal than the murderer who kills the body of a fellow human being. She had, in that one hour of self-righteousness, of immoral moral-house-cleaning, murdered a great and good man's faith and happiness for ever. He had flung the book down in furious disgust, refusing to read further. Then he had searched his own soul to find whether he, in her place, would have been possessed of the exalted courage to keep silent—to carry that cancerous secret to the grave. He had told himself proudly, at the time, that he could have done it.

Now he found himself face to face with a similar situation. He could shrive his own soul, as that wife had done, but he'd cleanse himself at the cost of Aunt Felicity's peace of mind and faith. And Polly's too. Destroy her faith and love. . . .

And, after all, it wasn't as if he had deliberately planned to deceive Aunt Felicity. When he had bethought himself of the brilliant "Solution," his only object had been temporarily to procure food and lodging at the expense of the British public, until he could get back the required force to renew his fight for existence. It had never occurred to him that he might be adopted by any one because of the peculiar accident of a resemblance to some one's lost relative. He had never dreamed of deceiving any individual. He was only indulging in a broadly impersonal deception.

Of course he could not hold himself guiltless. He didn't try to. Especially guilty he realized himself to

have been in permitting Miss Felicity to continue in her hallucination that she had found her own nephew; unpardonably guilty in not having fought his longing for love—the longing which had been bred of hard knocks, homelessness, and all those brutal years in France; he should have told her at once, there in the police station, that he was not Monty Trevider, and that he was Jerry Middleton. But he had felt powerless at the time. He had seemed controlled by some irresistible force which, paralysing his sense of honour, had pushed him over the chessboard for some hidden purpose—toward some unknown destiny. Whether he, Jerry, would ever realize the design or not, he firmly believed the events of the past months had not been of his own making, that even the solution of his own "Solution" had come from some extraneous and hidden source. When he had descended that shaft, it was solely for the purpose of rescuing a dog in distress. The blow on the head had not been of his own planning; it had at the moment seemed only an awkward and unnecessary accident. Yet, as he now relived that upward look, the discovery of that star far off in infinity, and the simultaneous revelation which had come to him of the meaning of the injury to his head, he regarded the star and the opening of the door of escape as co-evidences of some supernal incomprehensible force which man could never hope to understand or combat. A single stray vagary of thought in the human brain is as mysterious a miracle as birth, the creation of a planet, or the destruction of a sun. We are thrust on to the stage of this world blindfolded, to enact our small part in some infinite, stupendous drama, under the direction of an inconceivably omnipotent stage manager.

Jerry even believed, should he now try to tell the truth, he'd be checkmated again by a power, disguised

in the form of a Dr. Baragwaneth or some other motley.

He was too intrinsically honest not to sense to the uttermost the thorny path now set him to tread. Should Polly, by the grace of fate, ever become his wife me must look into her trustful eyes, himself veiling an old lie. He must never—could never—confess and feel himself a perfectly clean soul before her.

The full realization came to him of the pathetic longing of every human heart for confession. The great Catholic Church had planned an irresistible lure, based on transcendentally true and wise psychology, in recognition of that tragic, ineradicable need of the soul for the confessional.

"Am I big enough to shoulder this burden?" Jerry asked himself. "Can I enact this rôle which I now feel I am directed to play? Am I bigger than my own instincts—my own nature?" Then he asked himself what were his own instincts, his own nature—had he made them? Could he forestall any impulse, impede the entrance of any thought, to his brain, control the coming of any situation which might suddenly reveal new and unfamiliar instincts within him, avoid association with unheralded and curiously powerful individualities, which might, in their influence upon him, develop things in his nature which had not hitherto been apparent?

But to lose all sense of individual volition, of tangible personality, would mean nullity. One must fight for a certain degree of self-possession, for a saving sense of self-determination. He would believe that the human will had power, that the individual could take on responsibility—deliberately chosen responsibility. Independability of Fate he would take on the responsibility of his chosen action in this matter, and as he

dealt with Aunt Felicity and Polly so could the future deal with him.

"I hereby swear," said he aloud, "to seal one chapter of my life for ever in the vault of my own soul, so help me God!"

He turned over, closed his eyes, and slept the sleep which Nature grants without favouritism to the sinner and the saint.

CHAPTER XXXII

At eleven o'clock in the forenoon of Wednesday, Miss Felicity, Polly, and Dr. Baragwaneth assembled in Jerry's room by his request.

Miss Felicity could not resist surreptitiously dropping a few tears into her handkerchief at the first sight of her dear Monty. With his head swathed in that bandage, the poor boy reminded her so strikingly of a picture she had once seen of a turbaned Eastern potentate on a visit to England. It made her feel as if the dear boy was a foreigner.

Polly had said nothing by way of greeting, but she had lightly passed her fingers over the back of Jerry's hand in passing his bed. Her cheeks were suffused with an unusual colour.

Jerry was very pale, though there were spots of hectic colour under the eyes, and a curious metallic glint in the eyes themselves. Every fibre of his being seemed strung taut. He felt that at any moment he might snap in a hundred places if the strain became a fraction greater.

"Sit near me, Aunt Felicity," he begged. "Sit where I may touch you—if I need to."

Jerry felt that one close look into Miss Felicity's trusting eyes, one touch of her dear, helpless hands, should he find his will faltering, or the agony of his dissimulation become too insupportable, would fortify and strengthen him. He took her hand and stroked it gently, as if imploring her forgiveness for any pain he might be about to give her. He mentally sorted

over preliminary phrases and wondered just how to begin.

"If what I'm about to say hurts you"—he turned pathetic eyes on Miss Felicity—"please forgive me. I have recovered my memory. In recovering it, I realize I have lost the right ever again to call you

Aunt Felicity."

"Oh! my dear boy!" cried Aunt Felicity. "You are far too conscientious, you are merely fretting unnecessarily over some trivial omission or commission in the past. No right to call me Aunt Felicity, indeed! You could do nothing, you have done nothing in your life, my darling, which would or could deprive you of that right in my sight. How you have misjudged me! I am not a hard old woman, Monty. I can understand, forgive anything, done by those I love, by my own dear flesh and blood."

"You've misunderstood me," said Jerry gently, with love in his eyes but steel in his soul. "It is—alas for me!—it is, that I now know you are *not* my aunt. I am not your nephew."

Miss Felicity's lips fell open. Her eyes stared wildly at the speaker. She wondered which was mad—herself or Monty.

Polly's fingers interlaced so tightly they ached, but her face was kept under perfect control.

"Not Monty?" gasped Miss Felicity.

"No, Aunt Fe—I mean, Miss Felicity. I am no relation whatever. My name is Jerrold Emerson Middleton."

Miss Felicity's face seemed to freeze into a deathly blankness. She put a hand to her heart.

"Now, doctor," said Jerry, "I may be the example of an unusual mental phenomenon, or I may be but a very commonplace example of the erratic workings of the human brain. I don't pretend to understand

my own case. I know only that in recovering my memory, when I was down there in that shaft yesterday, I recovered an amazing lot. I have since recalled not only all that preceded the day on which I apparently lost myself-recalling every detail of my childhood life and youth-but, with the exception of two spaces—each of about twenty four hours' oblivion, I should say—I recall all that happened afterwards everything that has taken place since Miss Trevider adopted me in the mistaken idea that I was her nephew. I remember distinctly all that has occurred since I have been called Monty Trevider, except the time I was under the influence of your drug, just as distinctly as I do my former experiences, but with a curious distinction. I recall the Middleton part of me as Jerry Middleton—that is, the Middleton part is realized wholly from the point of view of the me that was Jerry Middleton, and the Monty Trevider part, from an utterly different Trevider angle. How can I make myself clear? I mean, it is as if I had actually been two distinct personalities, which, have, however, somehow become mysteriously merged into a composite me, which is, so to speak, Middleton-Trevider."

"Very remarkable," commented the doctor in a

non-committal tone.

"Of course," continued Jerry, "this peculiar grip on the two separate personalities and their distinctly individual memories—before and after the two blank spaces mentioned—may be contrary to all your medical science, but what are you going to do when you face theories with facts?"

"Science must bow to fact—necessarily," smiled the doctor. "If it is fact," he added meaningly. "Now I have a theory which I would like to submit. There is such a thing as delusion, and another thing which I may term self-hypnotism. In my opinion, you are the victim of both. I believe you to be Miss Trevider's nephew and at the same time Jerrold Middleton."

"But, in Heaven's name——" began Jerry.

"Doesn't it occur to you that you may have assumed the name of Jerrold Middleton on leaving England, dropping that of Trevider, and that in your present state of mental delusion you have temporarily forgotten that fact, and on recalling your career as Jerrold Middleton you have mistakenly supposed it to be that of a separate entity, while, as a matter of fact, it was only one phase of Monty Trevider?"

"Good Lord!" was all Jerry could articulate. And he had supposed this old duffer such an owl—had thought himself in his power—had imagined that the old fool knew all! Who'd been an ass? Surely it

was a case of 50-50.

"It's a beautiful theory," Jerry smiled, "a corking one, and for some reasons, and Aunt Felicity's sake, I only wish it was related to fact, but it's not. As a matter of simple fact, I was born in—"

"Ninety-Six!" the doctor interpolated, with a roar of laughter, as if he had perpetrated a joke.

It was Jerry's turn to show astonishment. How under the sun had the old fox discovered that? Did he after all know more than he was letting on?

"I can't see anything hilariously funny in that fact," said Jerry, with dignity. "I don't know how you came to know the name of my birthplace, but you're right. I was born in Ninety-Six."

"You mean the year ninety-six?" asked Miss Felicity, feeling as if her head was spinning around, and everybody had gone quite mad, including the doctor.

"He probably means that the thermometer stood

at ninety-six in the shade, at the time of his birth," laughed the doctor.

Jerry reached for Miss Felicity's hand.

"Listen to me, dear," he begged. "I was born in a small village in South Carolina. It is called Ninety-Six. In order that you all may get proof of the truth of my statement, I would like Dr. Baragwaneth to write our old doctor, Dr. Pickens, who brought me into the world. He would be able to bear out what I've claimed. We are careless in South Carolina; up to the time of the war—I mean the World War—we didn't bother about birth certificates, but Dr. Pickens knows that I was born, for he attended my mother, and he can corroborate everything I'm going to tell you about my mother and my own youth."

Jerry then gave a brief account of his mother's brave struggle after the death of her husband, and of his own life up to the point where we first met him, in

his lodgings in Lisson Grove, London.

It was at this point that Jerry forsook the path of straight truth and began to romance.

"I was at the end of my tether—had reached the last ditch," said he. "I'd failed over and over to get a job, and I hadn't had enough to eat for several days. I'd pawned or sold everything I had. I had to sell my overcoat to pay my landlady, and then—here it begins to be less clear—a little shadowy. . . . Let me think. . . . I remember I had decided to do away with my worthless self. I remember—but rather as through a slight fog—going out to a canal in Maida Vale, my few last personal belongings and keepsakes in a bag. I had destroyed all traces by which my identity could be established. I felt, as a suicide, I owed that to my mother's memory and my father's name. I weighted the bag and dropped it into the canal. I watched it sink, and as I watched it I must have lost courage—

or found it—I can't tell which. At any rate, I didn't follow the bag into the water. Instead, I again set forth, penniless, and without one thing belonging to my past, in a last desperate hope that Fate might reshuffle the cards and give me a new hand.

"I remember, as one does a dream, reaching the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Euston Road, and there my memory halts. It leaps a gap of what I suppose must have been twenty-four hours. My next memory begins just where Jerry Middleton seems to have passed out, leaving in his place an individual whom you, Aunt Felicity, called Monty Trevider. Does it all sound preposterous—impossible, Dr. Baragwaneth?"

The doctor smiled ambiguously. He tapped his forehead thoughtfully. "We don't pretend to wholly understand that mysterious organ back of this bone," said he, "but I'll undertake to say——"

"You don't believe me!" cried Jerry, feeling indignant, irrespective of the fact that he knew he had been lying.

"I believe you," said Polly. She abruptly got up and without another word left the room.

Miss Felicity and Dr. Baragwaneth exchanged glances as Jerry's eyes were diverted. The doctor significantly tapped his brow and shook his head sidewise, as if to say: "Don't take it too seriously, my dear lady."

Miss Felicity interpreted the pantomime to signify that the doctor now regarded Monty as either delirious or mad. Perhaps, after all, this would turn out to be only some hideous dream and the dear boy would be proved to be her own Monty. She couldn't believe that this poor turbaned creature, looking so Trevider-like for all his Ottoman aspect, could be a total stranger with a shocking, unheard-of, commonplace name.

The doctor strolled over to the bed, produced a thermometer, and put it in Jerry's mouth before he could protest. He drew out his watch and placed his finger on pulse. An enforced silence reigned.

The doctor looked at the thermometer. "You've no

business to be talking."

"But I'm going to," said Jerry stubbornly.

The doctor was just about to say, "It is against my orders," when Polly reappeared. Jerry demanded a pen

and paper.

"I want to write out the address of my old family doctor in Ninety-Six and the address of my landlady in Lisson Grove. They can corroborate what I've said."

When Polly saw the pen in Jerry's hand, an idea occurred to her.

"Monty, would you mind writing out a sentence for me?"

Jerry was perplexed, but replied he'd be glad to.

"Write, 'Your affectionate brother, Monty,'" she dictated.

Jerry stared at her in stark amazement. "What under the sun are you getting at now?"

Polly only said, "Write."

He did as she requested.

Polly looked at the signature fixedly. Then she took a letter from a pocket and compared the handwriting.

"Have you ever been in South Africa?" she asked

Jerry.

"South Africa!" he repeated, staring at her stupidly. "Of course I've never been there—I couldn't have af-

forded to get there."

Polly held the two sheets before Miss Felicity, the sample of Jerry's writing and the letter from Johannesburg.

"I got this over three weeks ago," she explained to

her Aunt Felicity. "Read the whole letter, then you will understand why I felt honour bound at the time to keep it to myself. Moreover, I couldn't be certain that it proved anything, for it might have been written in South Africa before Monty came to England—before you discovered the supposed Monty in London. You'll see, however, that there is not the smallest resemblance between the two handwritings. Mr. Middleton's story seems to me to prove beyond doubt that this letter was not written by him, but by my own brother, Monty, whom I believe to be at this moment in Johannesburg."

Aunt Felicity was too staggered to fully take in what Polly was saying. She only thought: "Now she's gone mad too."

It was Jerry's turn for surprise. He gaped at Polly and felt the room reeling. So she had received a letter weeks ago from the real Monty, and she'd never given a sign by look or manner! Talk about acting. . . . He relinquished his self-placed laurels to Polly. Fate had indeed delivered the blow in the nick of time. . . . He impatiently watched Miss Felicity as she read the letter. Astonishment and incredulity fought their battle on her face for all to see.

"Doctor"—she held out the letter—"you must read this too. I don't know what to think or do. It does sound like Monty—the old Monty, but . . ." A beautiful thought came into her mind—of course this Monty calling himself Middleton must be after all, and in the face of everything, her own boy.

"But," said she to Jerry, "you recognized Polly at first sight—you spoke her name."

"That's very simple—very easily explained," said Jerry, and proceeded to topple over her fairy castle by recounting the finding of the photograph and the overheard conversation of Paynter with Wiggs. "Dear, dear!" sighed Miss Felicity. She felt sure her brain had been turned upside down. The whole well-regulated, dependable world was now running higgledy-piggledy through space.

"The identity of the writer of my letter could easily be established by a cable," said Polly practically.

"We'd know in no time."

"Why should we be precipitate?" asked Miss Felicity, as she turned and looked wistfully at the invalid in bed. It would smack of the unseemly to be in such a hurry to prove that the dear, chivalrous boy, who had risked his life to save a mere dog, was an outsider. It would be inhospitable to do anything which would seem to imply that they wished to thrust him from them, when he was lying there ill and helpless. He should only be the subject of their consideration and sympathy and care. She had never before realized how dear he had become. She loved him—loved him far more than she had ever loved the irresponsible Monty of long ago.

"Oh! My dear boy!" she cried, bending and enfolding him in her arms as if she would hold him for ever close to her, keep the world of realities and separations at bay.

Jerry put his arms about her with yearning tenderness. He was conscious of an agonizing lump in his throat. Dam' it all, he mustn't cry!

"You've been so good to me, Aun-Miss Felicity."

"Do you want to break my heart?" asked Miss Felicity. "If you call me Miss Felicity again I think I shall just die."

"Oh! Aunt Felicity—may I? Of course you'll always be Aunt Felicity in my heart. I'm so sorry about it all. I've caused you so much trouble. I can never forgive myself."

"You've caused me trouble?" sobbed Miss Felicity.

"Why it's I who have brought all this on myself and on you. I placed you in this dreadful predicament. As I once reminded you, you claimed nothing. claimed you and brought you here and—oh dear! feel so mixed up—everything is so incomprehensible. . . . Here you are looking our own Monty to the life. Why, here is his mouth"—she touched his face lightly -"his nose, his brow. . . . It can't be true-no, it can't, can't. I can't look at you and believe in the existence in South Africa, China, or goodness knows where, of some other Monty." She suddenly straightened up, and a look of relief came to her eyes. "Didn't I once tell you I could trust my heart's instincts—that I could recognize the call of blood to blood? More than ever my heart tells me I am right; your blood calls to my blood. . . . In the face of every proof under the sun, I tell you all"-she turned defiantly to the doctor and Polly-"this is flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood! I'll stake my life on it. This is my nephew!" With which brave statement Miss Felicity seemed suddenly to lose starch and wrinkle into little folds all over. She slithered down to the floor beside Jerry's bed, looking for all the world like a crumpled, faded flower.

Polly rushed to her. The doctor pushed Polly aside, and, lifting the limp little form in his great arms, said peremptorily: "Open the door."

Jerry was left alone. He had destroyed all the world that had become so dear to him. He must now face the desert which he had created for himself.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Miss Felicity had recovered from her faint and was reclining on the couch in her morning-room.

"Well, doctor," she said, "what is your opinion?"

"Opinion?" ejaculated Dr. Baragwaneth. My dear lady, if you'd asked for my surmises . . . Miss Trevider, what do we positively know of the brain? I tell you we don't know, we don't know! If two pathologists out of three agree on a case you've got a coincidence, but not necessarily incontrovertible facts. I tell you, madam, we doctors are attending college every moment of our lives; we are students who never reach graduation this side of the grave.

"The brain! Sanity! Insanity! What maintains the one, produces the other?

"Now once I had the opportunity to make a postmortem examination of the brain of a man who, in the zenith of his power as a brilliant barrister, became as mad as a hatter. With the use of a microtome I made sections—slices of one four-hundredth of an inch in thickness—and examined every tenth section under my microscope with the most scrupulous care. What did I find?"

"Heaven only knows," sighed the long-suffering Miss Felicity.

"There was not a trace of anything in that brain to differentiate it from the brain of the sanest man who had ever lived. But I did discover a slight thickening in the walls of the cerebral artery of the Broca region. This should have caused aphasia—nothing more, but——"

"Aphasia?" asked poor, bewildered Miss Felicity. She wondered if Dr. Baragwaneth was really talking sense or was he merely babbling balderdash in the hope of distracting her mind from the conflicting thoughts surging through her own cerebral centres?

"Well, there is old Mr. Bodillo—he is suffering from aphasia. If he wants to ask for a drink of water, he will probably ask how far it is from here to Bideford."

"Why, he's simply cracked!" pronounced Miss Felicity, with the finality of the unprofessional mind.

"Cracked!" cried Dr. Baragwaneth indignantly. "He is not cracked. There is a unilateral weakness or hemiparesis of the oro-lingual movements, the symptoms of lesion having both an objective and subjective aspect——"

Miss Felicity groaned aloud. "I can't endure this nonsense, doctor, indeed I can't. Everybody seems to have gone as mad as March hares. If you rave on like this I, too, shall go mad. The only case on earth in which I take the slightest interest at this time is that of the poor boy upstairs. Do you think he is really responsible? Do you think he is capable of stating the whole truth?"

"As for any positive knowledge concerning that young man's cerebral condition, you and I are on a level. I will, however, remind you that the patient has at this moment a temperature of 103. He's got a severe chill from his yesterday's soaking, and has worked himself up into a fine condition of excitement. We must take his temperature into consideration in forming any conjecture regarding the reliability of his statements. Again: Though I am not a follower of the school of psycho-therapy, I must allow the tremendous influence of suggestion. Having become aware of the

name of Middleton, because of something said by the patient while under the influence of narcotics administered when he was ill in October, I, on his return to a state of complete consciousness, suggested to him the name of Jerrold Emerson Middleton, and asked him to concentrate on that name—to try to think in what relation he stood to the name.

"Now, how can I tell how far I am responsible for the tale to which we have just recently listened? Acting on the suggestion supplied by me, the brain may have fabricated the entire story—just as a sleeping dream may be constructed round some wisp of a word, heard or read during the day.

"I certainly believe that at some period of his life the young man called himself Jerrold Middleton, but I do not believe that to be his baptismal name.

"You see, my dear madam, it is very difficult for a doctor or a detective to let go of a good theory. I'm a stubborn creature, and in being stubborn in this instance I am illogically contradicting my positive knowledge concerning the workings of the combination of alkaloids which I employed during his last illness, and under the influence of which he first uttered the name of Middleton. By every rhyme and reason I should be convinced that the replies made to the questions I put to him while in condition of seminarcosis were true involuntarily true—the truth coming straight from the fount of subconscious realities. Yet here am I, clinging like a bally old donkey to a theory—an induced belief, if you like—that the patient is the victim of self-delusion, that he is your nephew, Monty Trevider, that he wrote that letter from South Africa, and that he imagined all that story—fabricated his experience in France—not voluntarily, mind you, but involuntarily.

"I believe him to be honest, at heart. We must not forget that in telling this story he was deliberately

throwing away every chance, depriving himself of his rights as heir to this great property and proud name."

"Then am I not to investigate further—not to cable

to Johannesburg?" asked Miss Felicity.

"Wait until to-morrow, my dear lady. Wait until the temperature is normal. There's no desperate hurry, is there? You don't want to rid yourself of him immediately, do you?"

"Oh no! Of course not."

"Then don't cable until he's had a chance to edit himself. We may hear a different story to-morrow. If we don't, then cable. But I shall be very much sur-

prised if you get a reply."

"You wouldn't object to my wiring Mr. Keylock—our solicitor—would you? Oh! Dr. Baragwaneth, I feel I must talk to some one. I'm so chaotic—I really fear my wits are going. I must consult somebody—some man, and Sir Wilfred—well, I couldn't expect him to leave his affairs in town just to come down for me. Mr. Keylock could get here quickly—on the night train from Plymouth. Not that I don't trust you, my dear doctor, not that I haven't implicit faith in your judgment, but the very profundity of your—your wisdom frightens my poor simple brain and I'd like to talk it all over with some ordinary man—like Mr. Keylock."

The doctor rose.

"Wire him by all means. I do not pretend ever to infallibility, and in this case I realize I can say and do little to comfort you. In one thing, however, I feel sure we are in perfect accord—our liking for this mysterious young chap. Why, bless my soul, Miss Trevider, he's the only man who has ever had the good sense and courage to tell me he wanted to knock me down! I've often deserved it, and said so to myself. So you see the boy and I are agreed on one point. And you and I are agreed on another—we both want to prove this fine,

honest, unfortunate lad to be a Trevider. Am I right?" Miss Trevider could only press his hand as two tears coursed over her eyelashes.

He had reached the door when Miss Felicity called to him: "One moment, doctor. Do you know, I had that same old dream last night, of which I've told you before. I dreamt—"

"My good lady!" The doctor put up a protesting hand. "Look at the time. Here I've kept all my patients waiting since eleven this morning, and it is now two-twenty o'clock. Do you suppose I've got time to stand here and listen to dreams?"

Miss Felicity flushed. She was unaccustomed to abruptness. Only the old doctor could with impunity venture rudeness to a Trevider.

"I beg your pardon for having detained you."

The doctor slammed the door.

"Dreams!" he snorted inwardly. "No wonder women never make great scientists." His brain produced the name of Curie, but he thrust it violently out as he thought: "I bet even she is full of some sort of feminine nonsense—they all are—everything is that's female," he added as he flicked his old mare and she shied at a dancing leaf blown in her face by an impish wind.

CHAPTER XXXIV

In response to Miss Trevider's wire, Mr. Keylock appeared shortly after breakfast the following morning.

Mr. Keylock weighed fourteen stone, but was not tall. The amount of cloth required for his trousers at the upper end was impressive; the material was necessarily drawn tightly over the imposing front of Mr. Keylock, but when he was not sitting down, the material draped the rear with melancholy folds. had once been blond. Where the golden hair had been there was now a pink nudeness. In fact, the hairless, eyebrowless, eyelashless condition of face gave one always-until accustomed by intimacy-an uncomfortable sensation of beholding some one entirely naked, so much did the face of Mr. Keylock dominate his body. The eyes of Mr. Keylock, like two dark buttons in pinksewed buttonholes, eventually decided one more comfortably that he really had the appearance of a very young, fluffless bird. He had a flattering way of listening to his clients as if what they said was important.

He now listened attentively to all Miss Trevider had to say about Jerry, then requested permission to interview the young man himself.

After a half-hour upstairs he rejoined Miss Felicity, and declared himself entirely convinced by the story he had just heard.

"However bitter the pill, you must swallow it, Miss Trevider," said he, with conviction. "You have made a mistake. He is not your nephew. He is undoubtedly the Jerrold Middleton he states himself to be.

"He has given me the name of the lawyer—Mr. Brooks—with whom his father was associated in practice. Is it your desire to pursue this matter further? Do you wish me to communicate with this Mr. Brooks?"

Miss Felicity found but little consolation in the matter-of-fact acceptance by Mr. Keylock of Jerry's statements. She would have rejoiced had he found them unconvincing. She now clung desperately to the hope that the doctor had been correct in his surmises. After all, Dr. Baragwaneth was surely in a better position as a physician to judge of the reliability of the patient's statements than Mr. Keylock. What did Mr. Keylock know of "suggestion" and the peculiarities of the "cerebral functions"? She regretted having sent for Mr. Keylock.

She was still regretting it when Dr. Baragwaneth entered. After greetings were exchanged the doctor asked if he might be permitted to reread the letter from Johannesburg. After perusing it carefully he said:

"It will, after all, be a very simple matter to find out if the writer of this letter and our patient upstairs is one and the same individual." He pointed to that portion of the letter which recounted the injury to the bone of the leg.

"There will, of course, be the cicatrice below the knee. I will go up at once and investigate."

When he returned he reported the patient better; his temperature was normal, but he had a severe cold in the head, and would better be kept in bed for a day or two. The wound was progressing satisfactorily.

"But the scar?" asked Miss Felicity impatiently.

"There is no scar on the leg below the knee," con-

fessed the doctor, "but I find the soles of the feet to be horribly scarred. It is a miracle he is able to walk—a miracle, I say."

"Scars on his feet! But how came he to be scarred on the feet?"

"He refused to explain—seemed to wish to avoid the subject. I fear he is anything but proud of the circumstances which produced those scars."

Miss Felicity showed by her expression that it was impossible to believe the scars to have been come by dishonourably. Her mind sped to the vital subject of the statement. "Does he still adhere to yesterday's story?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "There is no discrepancy between the claims of to-day and those of yesterday. I realize—I must realize—that all replies made to my question while under the influence of the narcotic were true. I now even believe it to be true that the cat is dead."

Miss Felicity thought the doctor was indulging in some unseemly joke. She replied in cutting tones: "There are probably thousands of dead cats, but I cannot see that *that*——"

"Yes, thousands," acknowledged the doctor, "and one particular cat besides."

Miss Felicity decided that poor Dr. Baragwaneth was getting old. He was undoubtedly beginning to "dote." It would really be advisable for him to take some young doctor as an assistant. What a predicament the countryside would be in, should any one become seriously ill, with no one to depend upon but a Dr. Baragwaneth obsessed about dead cats.

She turned to Mr. Keylock. He at any rate was still in a condition of normal, healthy, virile reason.

"What am I to do?"

"Cable at once to South Africa," declared Mr. Key-

lock succinctly. Mr. Keylock himself dispatched the message, which was worded as follows: "Have you received my letter cable reply Polly."

When he returned to Tolvean he found Miss Felicity in a state of mental distress, which might be described as disbelieving conviction. Her mind was convinced, her heart clung tenaciously to foundationless hopes.

"Shall I communicate with Mr. Brooks," repeated Mr. Keylock, as though there had been no interruption in their conversation, "or shall I see him personally? I chance to be sailing for the States on business by the Aquitania next week. If you consider the matter sufficiently important to justify the expense of sending me to South Carolina I will proceed there after my case in New York is finished."

Miss Felicity seized the opportunity with alacrity. It would be far more satisfactory for Mr. Keylock to investigate in person.

It then occurred to her, if it were indeed proved that her dear boy upstairs was not her nephew, he would be penniless.

"Mr. Keylock, some provision must be made for him. This is all my fault. I have brought him to this deplorable pass. I must do what I can. You know my own personal income far exceeds my modest wants. I can easily afford to settle—"

"Not a ha'penny more than two hundred a year, Miss Trevider," insisted Mr. Keylock.

"It seems such a paltry sum," sighed Miss Felicity, "but it will be something—it will keep him from starving, won't it?"

"It will provide him with something until he can find work."

"Work! What can the poor boy work at? He doesn't know how to do anything."

"Then the sooner he finds out the better it will be for him," said Mr. Keylock.

"You'll arrange the papers at once, on your return to

Plymouth," said Miss Felicity, rising.

After a tearful interview with Jerry, Miss Felicity decided it would take some diplomacy to make him accept anything whatever. He would not even consent to remain at Tolvean for the Christmas holidays. He was determined to leave as soon as he was physically able to travel. He insisted he must get to London and begin to "make good."

Next morning, as Miss Felicity and Polly were seated at the breakfast-table, a messenger arrived with a cable

addressed to Polly.

At the sight of it Miss Felicity paled; Polly flushed. Miss Felicity looked as if it might have been a message from another world. Polly's fingers quivered with excitement as she store the envelope open. She read: "No letter yet love Monty." The blow had fallen for one. The heavens had cleared for the other.

When Jerry came down after breakfast on Saturday morning he was aware of a palpitation of heart. He had not seen Polly since the day of revelation. She had not been near him all Thursday and Friday. He longed yet dreaded to see her. He could say, do nothing as yet. He was now only Jerry Middleton—penniless, positionless. Not until he had "made good," proved himself worthy, be in a position to support a wife, could he even look the love which more than ever filled his heart. Yet he longed to search Polly's eyes. He passionately yearned to corroborate what he thought he had seen there just before he had descended the shaft. If he could again see that light of love, it would be a beacon to steer by in all the difficult days to come.

He went into the drawing-room. Polly was not there.

He went to the library. It was empty. He climbed to Miss Felicity's morning-room. "Aunt Felicity, where's Polly?" he asked.

"She left this morning for Tavistock. She's had an invitation for the week-end with an old friend. I urged her to accept. The poor child has had a dull time since her return—we've not been entertaining because of—that is, because of your affliction of memory—and then the Boughton-Leighs being in mourning—I felt she needed diversion."

Jerry's heart felt like a lump of ice. Then he'd not see her again . . ., for he'd made up his mind to leave on Monday.

On Sunday, Jerry broke the facts of his true personality to Wiggs. Wiggs maintained a remarkable calm.

"So you see, Wiggs, instead of being a Trevider, I'm nobody."

"You are still yourself, sir," said Wiggs, and it sounded as if he might have said, "You are still the Prince of Wales."

"Next to Miss Trevider and Miss Polly, Wiggs——"
Jerry hesitated and felt queerly emotional.

He turned away.

"Thank you, sir," said Wiggs, with his usual psychological discernment of the full meaning of a half statement.

"Have you kept the suit I was wearing when we first met?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, sir."

"Then get it ready for me. I'll wear it to-morrow. Do you realize, Wiggs, that suit is the only thing in the world I now possess?"

"You possess that and much more, sir. You possess all those more valuable things which are not to be purchased from tradesmen. You possess your own char-

acter, your appreciation of things, your sense of honour. They can never be taken from you. And, you'll pardon me for reminding you of it, sir, but you possess the affection of—of several persons."

Jerry stared at Wiggs. Who'd have ever believed he could have made such a speech as that? Wiggs looked at that moment magnificent enough to have been mistaken for a British ambassador.

"Wiggs, you've been a crack-a-jack, a regular education to me! I owe to you a whole lot of the new things you've reminded me I still possess. I want you to know that I shall not look back on you as only my servant. I shall think of you always as my best friend."

"Oh, sir!" was all the overcome Wiggs could reply. The parting of Jerry and Miss Felicity was heart-rending to both. She had insisted upon his accepting twenty pounds as her Christmas present; as for his clothes, "What could I do with them?" she asked tearfully. So Sam had taken the trunk and bag to the station, and Wiggs was to drive there with his master to see him safely off.

Wiggs had been paid off with a month's extra salary. Miss Felicity had given him a letter of recommendation. The driver was to take him over to "Trelawny"—a neighbouring estate—after the master had gone. She had noticed an advertisement in *The Western Morning News* and thought Wiggs would find at "Trelawny" a position to his liking.

It was in the drawing-room that Jerry and Miss Felicity parted—the room in which she had first welcomed him to Tolvean. Through both surged memories of that first evening. Jerry looked tenderly about the room. He wanted to impress every detail on his memory. The room was indelibly associated in his heart with Miss Felicity and Polly—so much with Polly. Yet he suddenly found himself curiously unimpression—

able; everything seemed to have taken on an unreality. It was as if all this parting with things inexpressibly dear was happening to some one else. He did not realize that he had suffered to the limit of human emotion, and that beyond that point lay numbness. He seemed almost coldly self-contained when he took Aunt Felicity in his arms and kissed her good-bye. She clung to him wordlessly. She had intended to say so many things at the last and now she could say nothing.

He had gone. She rushed to the window and watched the trap rolling down the drive. Jerry did not turn—

he gave no backward glance.

"Oh, dear God!" prayed Miss Felicity, "send him back to me—some day."

There was no assembled villagers, tenants, or fisherfolk to see Jerry off. He contrasted his going with his coming, two months earlier. The station was deserted.

The train came in. Wiggs put Jerry's bag in the carriage. He rushed off to see that the other luggage was safely in the van, then bought a morning paper and brought it back to Jerry.

Jerry thanked him. He sat silent, and Wiggs stood silently staring out of the open door of the compartment. There was a sound of slamming doors. The guard blew his whistle.

The moment of parting had come. Jerry stood. He held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Wiggs. Good-bye, old man."

Wiggs ignored the hand, suddenly wheeled, reached out an arm, and slammed the door to. Wiggs was on the inside of the door.

He quietly sat down in the seat opposite. "What does this mean?" asked Jerry.

"It means I'm going with you, sir," said Wiggs. It was as if he had said: "Whither thou goest I will go. . . ."

Jerry's self-control snapped like a bit of brittle glass. He was blinded by tears.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE train had passed Grampound Road before either occupant of the carriage spoke, then said Wiggs:

"May I presume, sir, to ask if you have any plans in town—if you are going to friends?"

As Jerry replied in the negative he had a crushing sense of being a mere piece of driftwood. A shuddering vision came to him of his old "digs" in Lisson Grove—the soiled, lugubrious wallpaper, the tiny rusty grate, the fly-specked windows, the narrow iron bed, the filthy carpet. He mentally contrasted this sordid picture with his late sweet, spacious, chintz-bedecked, luxurious bedroom at Tolvean. How could he endure cheap, dirty lodgings again?

It was disconcerting to discover how easily one became accustomed to and dependent upon the beautiful, the downy. Never since that first night of his arrival at Tolvean had he consciously joyed in the beauty and comfort encompassing him; he had taken it all as a matter of course. Curious how easy it was to accept the good things of life, how one always felt surprise of an indignant character over the ugly things forced upon one. . . .

Jerry now saw Tolvean in retrospect—its old furnishings, its simple, unpretentious English comfort—with the clearer vision which follows loss. Envisaged thus, Tolvean became invested with a singularly beautiful glamour. He yearned homesickly, regretting les oignons d'Egypte.

Wiggs coughed nervously, a trick he had when desirous of politely drawing attention.

"I was going to make so bold as to say I would esteem it an honour, sir, if you'd accept my modest hospitality for a time. You see, I have a small flat in Bloomsbury. My sister Winnie lives there. It gives me a sort of base, so to speak, a home to return to when I'm not in service, or when I have my annual fortnight's holiday. My sister would feel very proud to do what she could to make you comfortable, sir."

Jerry could not trust himself to reply at once. He was deeply moved by the kindness and thoughtfulness of Wiggs.

"Gosh! Wiggs," he managed at last huskily, "you get my goat. But perhaps you don't realize what a burden I may be to you both. S'pose I don't land a job? I may be on my uppers for no telling how long."

"Mr. Middleton, please understand I'm not forgetting my position, but I'd like to ask you, sir, if you'd permit me to make you a small loan. I have, in my time, been able to put aside quite a tidy little sum. It would make me happy if I could feel that may savings could be of some service to you now. May I advance you a hundred pounds until you get on your feet, so to speak?"

Jerry got up impulsively and laid his hand on Wiggs's shoulder.

"Wiggs, I'll be damned if you aren't the whitest white man I ever came across. If I need money you can bet your bottom farthing I'd rather borrow from you than from any other man in the world. I'll accept all your offers—your hospitality—everything else as I need it. Wiggs, how the deuce do you get that way? Tell me about yourself—your life."

Wiggs looked horribly shy.

"You see, it might make me forget myself and my own wretched existence for a time," urged Jerry.

Wiggs was beguiled. It was a simple story, unpretentiously told.

The father of Wiggs had been head butler in the service of Lord Pendolver. Wiggs, as a little lad, had done the boots, polished the brasses, run on errands, and made himself generally useful. At an early age he had evinced a passion for reading and an all-absorbing ambition for an education. One afternoon when off duty he had assembled a number of the cottagers' children and was playing at being schoolmaster; he was in the midst of a peroration on the Plantagenets when he chanced to look about and found that his master was standing near listening with a quizzical smile.

Lord Pendolver was evidently impressed. A few days later he sent for the lad and asked him what he would like to become. Wiggs had promptly declared "a schoolmaster." The master had sent him to a good school, defraying all expenses of his education. In due time Wiggs became teacher in a Board School.

"A year later," continued the narrator, "my sister Winnie, who was then nursemaid to his Lordship's grandson, developed spinal trouble. She had never had a strong back. She needed treatment—expensive treatment. I saw that I couldn't give her the care she required unless I could make more than I was then earning. I went to see my benefactor and explained matters. He asked if I would care to accept the position of valet. He wanted to make a change."

"But," broke in Jerry, "do you mean to tell me you could make more as a valet than as a schoolmaster?"

"A Board School teacher in those days was shockingly paid, sir. As a valet I would have no living expenses. I could devote practically every penny of my generous salary to my sister's case. I accepted the

position, working with the valet then in charge for a month, until I had become familiar with the services required. I remained with Lord Pendolver for seventeen years—in fact, until his death. I was with Mr. Montagu for two years, and after he left I remained near my sister in London until the outbreak of war. I volunteered in vain for over a year, pushing my age back as far as I dared. The second year I got over to France—was an orderly in a hospital for a time; then when the Derby Scheme came in I got at last taken on as a private in the infantry. But the training did me in. I crocked up on the route marching—went to bits. I had to be content with canteen work for the remainder of the war. As for Winnie, she was finally cured by osteopathy. I then took on the flat in town, and she has lived there ever since."

The story had not been heroically told, but Jerry sensed all the goodness and sacrifice hidden under the commonplace words. He wondered if Wiggs had ever wanted to marry. He put his wonder into words.

"No, sir," said Wiggs. "From what I've been privileged to observe of marriage, I wouldn't say it is the only sure and safe road to happiness. I have never felt myself in need of a wife. My sister makes a home for me, and even though I'm not there often, it's a comfort to have it to think upon, and to know it's a home for Winnie too."

"How old are you, Wiggs?" asked Jerry.

"Fifty-two, sir, come Michaelmas. I shall retire at sixty."

The last phrase sounded so English, so national, Jerry smiled. He had a vision of Wiggs retired, and it was a pleasant vision: Wiggs reading his books, Wiggs being waited upon by a grateful, affectionate sister, Wiggs discussing politics at the post office and at the pub, Wiggs assisting with the daily marketing.

Jerry lit what was about the fifteenth cigarette since he had left Tolvean.

"Don't you ever smoke, Wiggs?" he asked.

"A pipe, sometimes," confessed Wiggs.
"Then light up," said Jerry.

Wiggs fumbled in his pocket for his tobacco. face became troubled, he flushed guiltily.

"Dear me, sir!" he cried. "I must indeed beg your pardon. I can't see how I came to forget it. I must have been in a most unnatural state of mind. . . . Miss Trevider entrusted a letter and package to me to give you at the station, and, sir, in the excitement of my sudden decision to accompany you it completely slipped my mind."

"That's all right," Jerry assured him. "I'm really glad to find you've got a human memory." He took the letter and package.

"The package Miss Trevider said she'd been asked by Miss Polly to give you at the last, when you were leaving. She thought it best to have me deliver it with her own letter at the station."

Jerry's heart glowed with expectation as he cut the string of the small parcel. So Polly had planned a surprise for him—some little parting gift, doubtless. Perhaps, too, there'd be a letter. He tore off the wrappings and sought in vain for a note, a message. He opened the pastboard box and paled as he saw, lying in a nest of cotton, the ill-fated diamond ring. She had returned their "fairy ring" without a word.

Jerry, numbed with pain, scarcely took in a line of the mechanically read letter from Miss Felicity. The true significance of her loving generosity only gradually dawned upon him. It was so like her-so typical of her dear considerateness, this provision of two hundred a year. Miss Felicity had put it so delicately, so affectingly, he realized he'd be a brute did he refuse the

offering. Her provision for him would serve only as a new stimulus to his ambition. He would make good! He'd have to, for Aunt Felicity's sake, even if there was to be no Polly to work for. It seemed evident that Polly had no love for him after all. She had thrust him out of her life without a word of farewell. Yet what could Polly have said? He had not declared himself—couldn't. . . . His eyes descended again to the letter. He read:

"I have communicated with Sir Wilfred, explaining the situation clearly. I have requested that he give you a position, if it be possibly within his power to make use of you. Failing that, I have asked that he use his influence to procure you some other berth. I recounted your cleverness with figures, how remarkably you had disentangled the estate accounts, and what judgment you had shown in all your suggestions in matters pertaining to the management of the estate. . ."

Dear Aunt Felicity! Jerry could imagine how delightfully she had overstated all his poor efforts. And how like her to forestall any failure on his part to get a job, by appealing to Sir Wilfred. Jerry hated to have to go to Sir Wilfred, but again he recognized that by not so doing he would hurt the dear little schemer who had used all her personal and Trevider influence to ensure a future for him.

He again thought of Wiggs's warm-hearted kindness; to Wiggs he had been but a penniless outcast, for the servant was unaware of Miss Felicity's generosity. Then he recalled anew all the goodnesses of Aunt Felicity toward him, and forgot the wound given by Polly in this hour of loss and uncertainty. Jerry found himself pervaded by a wonderful new peace and happiness.

He and Wiggs took a taxi at Paddington and sped to Bloomsbury.

The door of the flat was opened by a round-faced, rosy-cheeked, plump, middle-aged body, who had eyes only for her brother.

"Well, Henry!" she gasped in astonishment, and would have enveloped her brother in her arms had she not received a quick, arresting look from the commanding eyes of Wiggs, who, adroitly slipping beyond the reach of impulsive embrace, explained:

"Winnie, my young master has done us the honour to accept my invitation to be our guest for a time."

Jerry thrust out a hand. "How do you do, Miss Winnie?"

That overcome person quickly gave a damp hand an extra polish on an immaculate apron and then blushingly permitted it to be shaken.

"And I'm sure you're more than welcome, sir. Come in."

She ushered them into a small parlour, bravely fine with its plush-covered furniture, china clock, aspidistra, Nottingham lace curtains, and stuffed birds in a glass case.

Not a word of apology did Miss Winnie utter for things taken unaware, not a word of reproach to her brother for thus appearing with a guest unheralded. She only shed about her a radiance of hospitality and an appreciation of the great honour done them.

The sister and brother soon excused themselves, and Jerry forthwith heard sounds of a bed being made, and shortly after a door being closed; he surmised that Wiggs had been sent out to procure appropriate delicacies for the supper which would be cooked in his honour.

He sat contentedly smoking as he looked about at the humble finery. He found himself ruminatingly, rhythmically repeating, "Miss Winnie Wiggs, Miss Winnie Wiggs." The name had a jolly sort of sound. Soon he found himself saying:

"Winnie Wiggs, Winnie Wiggs. Tiddledy-winks and guinea-pigs."

Conscious of his own absurdity, Jerry laughed softly. Who'd have believed yesterday he could ever laugh again! Why, he felt as care-free and light-hearted as a boy. Life was good—good.

Some time later he was proudly shown into a wee spotless bedroom, where he removed the dust-stains of travel in the hottest of water fetched by Miss Winnie in a shining copper can.

When he was called to supper he entered the kitchendining-room to discover the table set for one only. He turned to Miss Winnie Wiggs, who alone was visible, and declared:

"Now look here, Miss Winnie, this won't do at all. I won't eat a mouthful unless I may eat it with you and Wiggs. Tell me where you keep things and I'll set the table properly."

Miss Winnie, after some giggly protestations, retired to consult with her brother; she returned with a smiling but disapproving Wiggs.

It was a wonderful supper she had prepared—a cream of tomato soup, a fat, fluffy omelette, looking like a wave turning and breaking into foam (and eggs such a price!), creamed potatoes with parsley, hot toasted scones, a salad of many mysteries, an apple-tart with cream, and tea. Jerry ate with an appetite he had not known for weeks.

Wiggs had evidently told his sister of the change in the identity of his master, but Jerry suspected he'd "laid it on" about the present status—probably representing him as an American millionaire—for Miss Winnie in now addressing him as Mr. Middleton conveyed a peculiar deference, whereas in the beginning there had been only a half-timorous respect.

As Jerry sipped his tea, he looked about the sweet, bright kitchen and observed its Cornish character. For cook-stove there had been installed a true Cornish "slab," the dresser for china was filled with Cornish "clume," the overmantel was adorned with two Cornish china cats, and the inevitable amusing pieces of Staffordshire—a huntsman and dog, a gallant and his last—and, of course, it had its "ticky-tock-tick and its brass candlestick."

He listened to the restrained conversation of his kindly hosts and basked in their simple consideration. A wave of thankfulness to a now benign Fate flooded him.

For the second time in his life he repeated to him-self:

"The poorest, veriest wretch on earth Still finds some hospitable hearth."

CHAPTER XXXVI

SIR WILFRED had been terribly upset by Miss Felicity's letter. To begin with, he had not been informed of Celia's broken engagement; on reading the true status of the supposed Monty Trevider he shuddered over the narrow squeak he had had. It did not occur to him to consider his daughter in the matter, or to think of her escape as fortunate.

Fancy if he had hastened matters with an unmournful impetuosity. . . . Fancy if he had married his only child to an unknown adventurer, with Heaven only knew what plebeian blood in his veins. It all demonstrated what precautions one should exercise in marital affairs. It demonstrated beyond all else that one should observe to the end of a twelvemonth the appointed-by-custom period of sorrow.

Sir Wilfred reread the letter from Tolvean and experienced no resiliency of sympathy. Of course he'd like to please Miss Trevider, of course one would naturally desire to do any favour possible for a Trevider, but—well, the demand was a bit thick! Why should one put oneself out for a mere Middleton—create a berth for a young man of no known class, and whose future must henceforth be entirely disassociated with all things Trevider?

Miss Trevider was an estimable woman and a simple one. Yes, very simple. She unfortunately suffered from the affliction of being a woman. She was essentially the impracticable feminine. That she could fancy that he would disarrange the well-ordered affairs

of his office to make place for an unknown American was irrefutable proof that she was emphatically female.

Perhaps if his affairs gave him the opportunity he might later on give Middleton a letter of introduction to some one. But even that would be a beastly annoyance. He himself always resented business friends who sent unemployed persons to him, expecting him to provide assistance where they themselves had provided none. At the moment he could think of no one to whose opinion he was so indifferent that he would care to incur their irritation by sending to them an indigent Middleton, with the request that they provide a livelihood for the said Middleton.

Of course he would write an appropriately sympathetic letter to Miss Trevider. He would promise to do what he could to meet her desires. But he would tactfully make her realize, in a subtle manner, the vastness of the concerns of the Shipping Line of Boughton-Leigh and the enormous difficulties connected with even the slightest disarrangement of its perfectly adjusted machinery.

As for young Middleton he would make brief work of him. (Sir Wilfred was a past-master at bringing an unsought and unpalatable interview to a close.) He would begin by being suavely sympathetic with the unfortunate victim of disarranged memory; he would refer in proper terms of regard to Miss Trevider and her request, and then show, in a sentence, the incredible ingenuousness of that feminine request; he would with dignified impressiveness demonstrate to young Middleton the unquestionable advantage of a position in the office of his line, and having dangled this delectable plum for a moment's vision, withdraw it neatly; then with a vague, non-committal promise of possibly used influence in other less distinguished quarters, rise and

indicate with every line of his body that the interview, and the acquaintance, was at an end.

He hoped Middleton would exhibit the to-be-expected American graspingness and present himself without delay. A disagreeable thing got over quickly was a disagreeable thing dismissed. Sir Wilfred left orders at the bureau downstairs that Mr. Middleton be sent up to his sanctum as soon as he might arrive. He hoped to get the tiresome affair over and the slate clean before his interview with Monsieur Epailly that morning. Monsieur Epailly was the gentleman in charge of the office of the Boughton-Leigh Line in Havre. Sir. Wilfred had planned vast alterations and enlargements of the Line's activities in France.

Taking out a fragrant cigar and cutting it with exquisite care, the great shipping magnate leaned back and puffed quietly, becalming himself by degrees, as his eyes strayed pleasantly and gratifyingly over his expressive surroundings.

Sir Wilfred's spacious sanctum was the last word in a restrained exhibition of unlimited wealth. Everything was the best of the best, but unflauntingly the best. The floor was covered by the thickest of deep sea-green velvet carpets, padded until the footsteps of mortals made no more sound than would the passage of ghosts. The huge, luxurious chairs were as padded as the floor. The deep ocean-green leather upholstery was as pliable and soft as Sir Wilfred's own skin. The walls were the blue-green of waves. The desk, of the most modern business utility in design, was fashioned cunningly and elegantly in the palest of solid mahogany. The appointments of the desk—inkstand, blotter, calendar-holder, pens—were not of bourgeois brass but of regal gold.

The mantel of pale mahogany suggested, in its magnificence, the architecture of the baronial hall. Hung

in the centre of its over-panelling, in a dull Florentine frame of great beauty, was a painting of that sea which Sir Wilfred considered a part of his personal property—the part which had been created by a benign and farseeing Providence for the accommodation of the great fleet of Boughton-Leigh ships.

The painting was the customary interpretation of the moonlit sea by Julius Olsson. In purchasing this painting, Sir Wilfred had not only shown an appreciation of art, but had expressed his personal desire to do honour to the Olsson whose position, in the baronet's eyes, was not so much dignified by the R.A. which the painter could write after his name, but because of the J.P. which, by the grace of Cornwall, he was also entitled to use.

Below the painting, in a niche of the mahogany of the mantel, stood a beautifully carved figure of St. Ia, the Irish princess and martyr so associated with Sir Wilfred's own particular corner of Cornwall.

On the walls hung four large paintings, by expensive English artists, of the most impressive of the Boughton-Leigh ships.

The electric-light fixtures were artistic adaptations of the fantastic form of the hippocampus.

The tall windows were hung with heavy velvet curtains of a colour suggesting mid-ocean at twilight.

No one had ever felt frivolous in that room. No one had ever been known to laugh aloud there. It was not planned for the lighter moods of life. It was planned to awe as the sea awed.

And Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh, when seated in his high-backed, carved, and leathered chair—somewhat suggestive of the coronation chair which resides in Westminster Abbey—felt himself essentially Neptunish, even if in his austere, attenuated body he held

but slight resemblance to the generally accepted jolly conception of the god of the sea.

Monsieur Epailly was announced by the liveried

doorkeeper.

Sir Wilfred greeted him with his manner especially reserved for the treasured heads of foreign branches.

The Frenchman bowed stiffly with extreme formality and shook the proffered hand of the great master of shipping with an official solemnity. He gave no glance to the magnificent room, but stood immobile until requested to be seated. He retained his gloves. He sat with an amazing movelessness awaiting his chief's opening of the business to be discussed.

Sir Wilfred launched the subject impressively and proceeded to a conservatively restrained but no less vivid delineation of his lately conceived plans. Monsieur Epailly gave an impeccably respectful, calm attention.

The door opened and Jerry Middleton entered unannounced. The moment of his coming was inauspicious.

Inconsistently forgetful of his own instructions that Middleton was to be sent up on arrival, Sir Wilfred experienced the most irritable annoyance over the interruption. His manner became frigid. Without rising he said:

"Good morning. I regret to say I'm engaged. If you'll come to-morrow——"

"Certainly. That's all right, Sir Wilfred. Sorry I disturbed you," said Jerry, turning to retire.

The Frenchman had kept his eyes politely fixed on the desk, but at the sound of Jerry's voice he turned sharply. Some potent magic seemed to transform him; every fibre of his body became electrified. His gloved hands first waved in the air, then his arms were extended dramatically. In tones of tremendous emotion he cried:

"Mon Dieu! Est-ce possible?"

The Frenchman sped across the sea-green carpet like a rising hydroplane and enveloped Jerry in his wings as he ejaculated:

"Mon brave! Mon brave! Mon cher ami!"

Sir Wilfred was aghast. Never had he been forced to witness such unbridled emotion. The entire room looked outraged. And he, Sir Wilfred Boughton-Leigh, and his great affairs were being ignored, forgotten! That Middleton was actually laughing—laughing aloud. And Epailly was both laughing and weeping, as he fired French exclamations of joy and endearment with the rapidity of a .75 gun. Heaven help us! he was now kissing—yes, kissing Middleton on both cheeks!

Sir Wilfred coughed. He coughed again more loudly. The third time he coughed consumptively. Attention was at last returned where it should have remained from the first.

Monsieur Epailly turned to his chief and, dragging forward a smiling, deprecatory Jerry, said exuberantly:

"Without doubt you also will have the desire to salute him. You will not let my presence prohibit your affairs together. What is this that I am, that I should take precedence over Monsieur Meeddleton?"

He, Sir Wilfred, salute this Middleton indeed! Had Epailly become bereft of his senses? Sir Wilfred sat petrifiedly unmoved and unsaluting.

"Is it possible that you have not the acquaintance of this 'ero?"

Before Sir Wilfred could gather himself for a reply, the Frenchman was volubly recounting the tale of his adored Meeddleton.

It was the night of the attack on a hospital back of Verdun, by the Boche aeroplane. Middleton himself was at that time a patient recovering from a scalp wound. Without warning the raider had come. An operation of grave seriousness was then in progress. All the doctors and most of the nurses were assembled in the operating theatre. That part of the hospital had been struck by the bomb. It exterminated all there. A fire immediately developed—un feu d'enfer. It was a case of sauve qui peut. Pandemonium! Chaos!

Middleton, leaping from his own sick-bed, was seemingly endowed with inspiration and power by the good God. He had assumed authority and enforced order where there had been only frenzied confusion. He organized the saving of the helpless by those able to walk, himself exhibiting a coolness outside imagination and a generalship to be envied by the great Foch himself.

When all had been accomplished which seemed humanly possible there yet remained nine helpless unfortunates in the hospital. These were the most critical cases—those considered sans espoir. Their ward had been rendered the most inaccessible, through the havoc wrought by the bomb.

Middleton, forbidding all others to re-enter the hospital, himself returned again and again—each time to what appeared certain death from flames and falling timbers.

He had at the greatest peril succeeded in at last rescuing eight of those grievously wounded poilus. And then fichtre! the dirty assassins are returned—returned to present another bomb in case their work of fiendishness had not been sufficiently accomplished. . . . Nom de Dieu! for the ninth time Middleton, deaf to the droning of the approaching machine, had re-entered that inferno. He reached the malheureux, lifted him from his couch, carried him to the rez-de-chaussé—when dame! the second bomb struck. . . Oh! les canailles. The

shock was terrific. Middleton and the unfortunate were flattened—half buried under debris of plaster, shivered wood, and glass. With a broken right wrist, with only a cut, scorched left hand to work with, he had extricated himself and eventually liberated the pinioned, helpless one. Bon Dieu! It was superb—of a caractère miraculeux!

With the wounded carried in the one good arm, the rescuer had finally reached the outside, the soles of his poor bare feet cut to bits by the jagged glass he had trod upon, his pyjamas torn to ribbons, his body bruised, bloody, scorched. . . . But it had been accomplished! Middleton had saved the ninth and last!

"Voyons!" cried Monsieur Epailly dramatically, "I am that ninth!" He stiffly came to salute. With quivering lips he murmured, "Mon sauveur!"

Sir Wilfred was irresistibly stirred. He had to get up and walk about to preserve a proper equilibrium of emotion. It was, of course, the damned contagious emotionalism of that Frenchman. . . . Suddenly, to his own amazement, he turned and grasped the hand of Jerry. "I'm proud to know you," said he simply.

"Bien sûr, you must be proud," cried Monsieur Epailly. "What said the great Pétain when he has decorated him? He has said—the beautiful words remain with me—he has said: 'The 'eroism of this indomptable soldier has been such as to challenge—défier—the admiration of every one.' Mais c'est vrai! And you, mon brave, ça va bien? What do you now?"

"Nothing," confessed Jerry. "I'm hunting a job." "A job?"

"L'emploi," explained Jerry.

Monsieur Epailly looked pained and amazed. "Is it possible that a 'ero is without employment? Come to France!" he cried lyrically. . . . "Come chez nous, mon ami. France does not forget her 'eroes. France

will welcome you. As her ambassadeur I extend to you her remerciments. I offer you the employment in the name of la France."

This was too much for Sir Wilfred's British soul. Could he permit France to outdo England in any point of appreciation? Of course it would have been better if Jerry had saved Englishmen, but the ninth Frenchman had been a valuable and able man—an employee of the Boughton-Leigh Line.

"I must insist," said Sir Wilfred, "that I have precedence in this matter. Mr. Middleton came here today by an appointment made by a common friend of ours. I have need of him in my counting-house department." He turned to Jerry. "You will please report to-morrow morning at half-past eight."

Jerry expressed his thanks and turned to bid Mon-sieur Epailly adieu.

"But you go? Then it is necessary that I go with you. We will lunch together. I will drink à votre santé. And we will drink once more together to la belle France, n'est pas?"

Monsieur Epailly seized his hat. He bowed stiffly to Sir Wilfred and said, "Cheerio," which he fancied to be very good English form and expressive of au revoir.

Sir Wilfred and his important plans for the French branch at Havre were unceremoniously left to be considered at another hour!

"Damme!" gasped Sir Wilfred.

He lit another cigar, drew a sheet of paper toward him, and picked up a slender, gold-handled pen. He would now write the estimable Miss Trevider and assure her of his pleasure in meeting her desires. He would do all that lay in his power for her protégé. It would be pleasant to recount to Miss Trevider the heroism of that young man to whom his daughter had once

been engaged. He would deftly mingle the proud obligation felt by Englishmen toward all heroes, irrespective of the flag under which the glory had been achieved, and his own appreciation of the opportunity given him of honouring one who was at once the friend of Miss Trevider and a soldier decorated by Pétain.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Jerry went to work with such enthusiasm and demonstrated such capabilities he surprised every one, including himself. Within a fortnight he was entrusted with greater responsibilities and received a compliment from the Chief.

His days passed with rapidity and contentment. The Wiggs's surrounded him with every comfort within their modest power. Though Wiggs pretended he was taking a holiday, he, as a matter of fact, performed exactly the same services for Jerry which he had rendered in the past, when a salaried servant.

Miss Winnie Wiggs insisted upon bringing in Jerry's seven o'clock tea herself, and she took the greatest pride in attending to all necessary darning and mending.

They had a quiet, happy Christmas with much good food. Jerry delighted the heart of Miss Winnie by getting tickets for the pantomime at Drury Lane on Boxing night.

January passed without any notable incident. February came and found Jerry ever more engrossed and interested in his work. It was on the morning of the 9th of February, just a little over nine weeks after Sir Wilfred had given him employment, that Jerry found on his desk a slip of paper on which was a request that he report himself on arrival to Sir Wilfred.

Jerry had not been in the imposing sanctum of the Chief since the memorable encounter with Monsieur Epailly. He found Sir Wilfred seated in the coronational chair before his desk.

"Good morning, Middleton," said he cordially. "Be seated. By this morning's post I have received a letter from Miss Trevider. She requests that I permit you to go down to Cornwall on Friday—that's to-morrow. I cannot see why the week-end would not have served equally well, but of course women have no comprehension of the value of time. Can you get matters in such shape that you may conveniently leave by the Riviera to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir, I can," said Jerry, trying to disguise his perturbation and joy. Aunt—Miss Felicity is not ill, I hope—every one is well?"

"She does not mention any illness. She refers at the end to the return of Mr. Keylock from the States. I cannot see why she would think I am interested in the travels of her solicitor."

"Then I may go?"

"Yes."

"Thanks, Sir Wilfred. Anything I may do for you while I'm down there?"

"No. Thanks," said Sir Wilfred abstractedly, again preoccupied by his own affairs.

It took every ounce of will-power Jerry possessed to concentrate on work that day. The thought of returning to Tolvean, if for only a week-end, thrilled him to the depths. The thought of again seeing Polly made his hand tremble to such a degree that the figures written looked as if they had been done by a man with palsy. And the thought of dear Aunt Felicity was like the song of a bird at the door of his heart.

Jerry walked home to the Wiggs's flat that evening. A bus would have been insufferable. He wanted action and a chance to think.

London had never looked more entrancing. There

was a light fog, to which the sunset lent a golden radiance. Everything took on a faerie, ephemeral unreality.

Although Jerry's mind was a seething mass of anticipations and excitements, his senses were sharpened to an unusual keenness. Not the subtlest nuance of beauty was lost upon him. He joyed in the loveliness and loveableness of London as never before. He felt the same tender pride in her that the born Cockney feels.

London was good. Life was good. Everybody was good. It was a "topping" old world after all.... Jerry marvelled at the change of his views about life since two months earlier.

It really looked as if some amazing turn of the tide had occurred from the moment he had made that decision to take the responsibility of his own actions irrespective, independent of Fate. It looked as if he had unwittingly called a bluff and won out. Or was it that Fate had put him to some sort of ultimate test, and, finding that the marionette stood pat—refused to dance longer to the pull of the strings—had decided to change his methods?

That was a fine mutinous cry of Henley:

"I am master of my fate, I am captain of my soul. . . ."

even if it was disputable.

Perhaps, though, defiance did give one a power. He remembered a man who was not a Christian Scientist, or a Christian anything, once telling him that he could damn a pain out of his body. In other words, he defied it, refused to give it place.

Returning to his own case, Jerry wondered if after all the change which had occurred in his fortunes might

not perhaps be but a demonstration of the natural law of the Great Pendulum.

All the fundamental movements of the universe are vibratory—the seasons, the tides. . . . Heat, cold, storm, and calm—were all manifestations of the swing of the pendulum from one extreme to the other. The movements of things physical and moral were governed by the same law.

We seem at times to get into a sinister current and meet with nothing but disaster. We call it "bad luck." Then the tide shifts and we have what we call "a run of luck."

He had surely had a run of luck since that day on which he had told his story to Aunt Felicity, Polly, and the doctor. And yet at the time it looked as if he were throwing everything to the winds, making himself a homeless pauper. From the very depths of his blackest despair—on the journey to London—he had suddenly soared upward—tasted genuine happiness, the happiness bred of a true realization of the great-heartedness and goodness of others. Wiggs had sowed the first seed of Jerry's new-found joy of life. Then there was the generous sweetness of Aunt Felicity, and the simple kindness of Miss Winnie Wiggs. (Jerry even imagined himself the object of Sir Wilfred's generous goodness. Fortunate, indeed, is the wearer of rose-coloured glasses. . . .)

And now that he was invited down to Tolvean his cup of joy bubbled entirely over. He attempted no surmise of the whys and wherefores of the invitation. Jerry was unaware that Miss Felicity had sent Mr. Keylock to South Carolina.

When he reached the Wiggs's flat and announced he was going down to Tolvean next day for the week-end, Wiggs asked permission to go with him. And so it was they arrived together at Trewarthenith and drove out

to Tolvean, each reliving in his own mind the bitter anguish of that last drive over the moorlands.

Miss Felicity was waiting at the door to greet Jerry, her little body an aspen leaf of quivering excitement and joy. Jerry waved to her at the turn in the drive; then, unable to restrain himself, leapt from the still moving trap, ran forward, and in the violence of his embrace lifted her off her feet.

"Let me look at you," cried Miss Felicity. She held him off and examined him tenderly. "Oh, but you're looking bonny!"

"I'm as fit as a cat and a fiddle," laughed Jerry. "And how's everybody?" By everybody he meant Polly.

At that moment Polly came down the stairs with a rush. She approached, smiling as composedly as if her heart were not trying to jump out of her body. Jerry was thankful he was not an octopus. If he had been, he felt sure he would be exhibiting every emotional iridescent hue imaginable.

He and Polly shook hands, murmuring conventional greetings. Miss Felicity went out to greet Wiggs and express her pleasure that he had come with Mr. Middleton. Polly and Jerry were left alone. Jerry felt and looked frightfully shy. Polly, entirely unembarrassed, said:

"Come on into the drawing-room. I'm awfully glad you've come, for I'm just bursting with gossip. It will be such a relief to have some one to talk to. What do you think? Celia is in love with the awful Coolie!"

"I knew that all the time," said Jerry complacently. "Well!" cried Polly, with mingled astonishment and disappointment. "And I thought you'd be bowled over with surprise. It was Mrs. Spankie who brought things to a climax. You see, Coolie just went off his head about her—pauper or no pauper. He got so absolutely

silly she evidently thought it expedient to show her hand, so she let it be incidentally known that she's engaged to a subaltern in India—Aunt Felicity says she must have a passion for poverty—and she's to go out there to be married as soon as he gets promotion. Well, then Celia saw her chance, and she has worked it for all she's worth. She really ran after Mr. Coolie in the most brazen way. But I don't think Mr. Coolie needed a fearful amount of coaxing, once he'd really got his senses back, for, of course, Celia and Celia's prospects of money aren't to be sniffed at by an indigent curate. Won't Sir Wilfred absolutely froth at the mouth with rage?"

"He won't take it lying down."

"But Aunt Felicity is on Celia's side, and you know she has a tremendous amount of influence with Sir Wilfred. I'm putting the odds on Aunt Felicity."

"He'll do the decent thing by Celia in the end, you may be sure."

"And Mr. Coolie's trying to get a living in British Columbia. The Bishop is in England now."

"Celia will love it out there, where 'big sins are committed by charming people.' I think it'll be an ideal match. I'm glad somebody can get married and be happy," sighed Jerry, as he took out a cigarette.

Polly got up quickly. "I mustn't keep you another minute. You'll be wanting to freshen up after your journey. You won't have more than ten minutes before dinner, so don't try to 'doll up.'"

"But didn't Aunt Felicity want to see me about something?"

"Oh, not before dinner," laughed Polly. "Nobody ever does anything on an empty tummy in this house. Run along now."

When Jerry was half-way up the first flight of steps he heard Polly come into the hall. She called up shyly: "I think you were just-just topping, out there, in France-I mean during that air raid."

"Oh, that!" said Jerry disparagingly. He blushed and ran on up, two steps at a time. To Jerry, Polly's

praise beat the croix de guerre all hollow.

In spite of the ten minutes, Jerry found Wiggs awaiting him with evening clothes in readiness. He did a lightning change, soon reappearing, below, looking, as Polly thought, remarkably handsome.

It was a happy meal. Even Aunt Felicity gave free rein to her inner joy. She drank an extra glass of wine and became quite scintillating. In the midst of the general laughter and gaiety she, however, seemed to be suddenly seized with quaint misgivings. "I hope," said she, "we are not indulging in what the Bible calls 'revelling.' "

At this Polly laughed and choked on a mouthful of water, and had to be pounded on the back by Jerry. She gasped, gurgled, wept, and laughed. The butler at this point became so infected he had to retire from the room.

After dinner, Miss Felicity, trying to curb her excitement and to appear quite serene, said perhaps Polly would play a little for them. Later on she'd like to have a talk with Jerry in the morning-room.

Jerry had the greatest admiration for the self-control exhibited. He realized Miss Felicity's desires were all for an immediate tête-à-tête.

Polly mercifully played the two shortest Chopin Preludes. At their conclusion she said: "Now that's absolutely all for to-night. I'm reading Ferrere's La Bataille, and I can't wait another second to get back to it."

Miss Felicity got up. Jerry, putting an arm about her, led her from the room. He could feel the beating of her fluttering little heart. When they reached the morning-room, Jerry put her in the most comfy chair, tucked a pillow behind her back, and then flung himself at her feet. It was just as they had sat five months earlier on the night of his arrival at Tolvean.

"My dear," said Miss Felicity, "I haven't mentioned it before, but you must now know that I sent our solicitor, Mr. Keylock, to Ninety-Six, to find out all he could for me about you and your father."

"Really!" exclaimed Jerry in surprise.

"He was able only to verify your statements about yourself. Unfortunately he was unable to discover anything further regarding the history of your father, but he had a very interesting talk with Mr. Brooks.

"It seems, my dear, your poor father realized for some time that his life was nearing its end. He grieved very much that he would not live to see his child. He entrusted to Mr. Brooks a safety-deposit box, which he asked Mr. Brooks to deliver to his child, whether boy

or girl, on its twenty-first birthday.

"You, it appears, left Ninety-six abruptly about five months before coming of age. You did not say good-bye to Mr. Brooks. You told no one of your intention to go to France. You left no address with any one. It was impossible for Mr. Brooks to trace or locate you. So he was unable to deliver the box when the appointed time came. He had almost come to the conclusion that you were dead—killed in the war. He was overjoyed to hear of you again, and delivered the box to Mr. Keylock to be given you." Miss Felicity got up and went to her desk. She took from a drawer a black tin box. "Here it is, and here is the envelope containing the key."

Jerry had risen. He received the box silently.

"Take it up to your room, dear. You will want to be alone with this message from the dead. If after you've read if you want to see me, you'll find me awaiting you here."

As one in a dream, Jerry walked from the room and up the stairs. He sat staring dazedly, holding the box and the sealed envelope. He was facing the first actual contact with his dead father. That father, dying before Jerry's birth, had seemed more nebulous than a character of fiction. He had been a name, nothing more. Now he suddenly began to grow real—and wonderfully near.

It seemed as if there was a presence, never before felt. Jerry's heart yearned toward the dead and neverknown father. With reverence he broke the seal of the envelope and took from it the key which had last been held by that long-dead hand.

He opened the box. It contained a small box and a long envelope addressed to "My Child."

With trembling fingers and profound emotion, Jerry unfolded the yellowed sheets of paper. The concluding page was exposed to view. He saw the signature at the end. He leapt to his feet. The box fell unheeded to the floor. His face went pale to the semblance of death. "Great God!" he ejaculated in stupefaction, as he again read the signature, incredulously, read it aloud:

"Charles Cecil Nevil Trevider."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

JERRY read:

"I have a prophetic impression I am addressing my son.

"Perhaps it is only the intense hope of my heart that you, my child, may be a boy, which produces this comforting conviction. It may be but the inherent desire bred of our English law of primogeniture. I passionately desire you to be a son.

"I no longer grieve that I am not to share your life. Failure is contagious. It is disintegrating to be long in intimate contact with failures of any kind. The successful structure of your character, your very life-success, depends upon my withdrawal.

"In the choice of your mother I evinced an uncharacteristic wisdom. She is a Ravenel. She is efficient. In deliberately withholding from her the facts concerning my birth, my true name, and my rights of inheritance, I shall perhaps stand at the bar of your judgment accused of unfairness, ungenerosity, if not actual cruelty. One can endeavour only along the line which seems convincingly right to oneself, regardless of verdict.

"I have planned solely for my child. I have had to sacrifice my wife for my child.

"Above all, I desire my child to be self-sufficient,

strong, independent, chivalrous.

"Your mother will find a way. She will have to work. She will set you an example which will not be wasted. Your sense of chivalry will be roused by wit-

nessing her efforts to support you. Her labours will incite you to industry. Necessity will, I hope, teach you efficiency.

"Your mother, no matter what drudgery she may have to undertake, will always remain the gentlewoman. You will inherit from her an instinctive delicacy of refinement, without snobbishness.

"Lack of funds may deprive you of a college education, but nothing can rob you of the larger education of life—of experience. I wish to insure that you grow up an American, without any hope of advancement in life save that to be won by your own abilities, your own character, your own industry. In assuring this, by my silence, I am providing you with a far better heritage than if I gave you at birth the right to claim a great English estate.

"By the time you receive this letter your life-structure will have been fashioned, your character moulded, your ideals established. This will have been the work of your mother, of a life of struggle, and—above all—of America. You will then be matured into the youth I dream of—the son whom I desire to go to England to claim all that I relinquished, a son who will bring to his inheritance a fresh, brave, stalwart spirit, ruggedly reared.

"To comprehend my plan and my ideals for you it will perhaps be necessary to become autobiographical.

"Never until the age of four-and-twenty had I known a hardship, a trial, a lack of funds. I came of proud old Cornish stock of inherited affluence. I was educated at Oxford and took a degree in law. With an inherited tendency to gamble, I got heavily in debt even in my college days. My father paid the debts with a sort of pride. I was a chip of the old block. Some months after graduation I went to London. My father put me into an office in the Temple. One night at my

father's club, of which I had been made a member, there was a game of cards. The cards, it disclosed itself later, had been tampered with. Details at this late date are unnecessary, but there ensued a deplorable scene. Appearances were not in my favour. I was accused of cheating. I resigned from the club. My father came to London. He disbelieved me. He believed his own son, his own flesh and blood, a Trevider, could be guilty of that! When I realized this fact I parted from him. I have never forgiven my father. My last moment will find me unrelenting in my bitterness toward him. Now that I myself am facing fatherhood, now that I can sense within myself the response, the understanding, the faith which I could bring to a son of mine, I forgive my father less than ever.

"I refused to accept a penny from him. I threw his proud name in his face. I rejected for ever the inheritance which would be mine at his death. I went forth from him blind, staggering under a deadly bruise.

"For weeks I drifted about town. I unsuccessfully sought manual labour on the docks. I fell in with sailors and frequented sailors' pubs. It was at a pub that I became acquainted with the man whose name I have handed on to you—Middleton.

"John Middleton was a rugged young seaman, a decent enough chap. I have respected his name and have tried to keep it clean. It was he who took me to the Sailors' Home in Dock Street, where I lived for some weeks. Middleton had fallen in love with the daughter of a Houndsditch publican. He decided to give up the sea. With pliable morals, he offered to sell me his ship's papers for a tidy sum, to allow me the use of his name. The bargain was concluded. In another week I, as John Middleton, got a chance. I shipped to Australia. The work was hard to one unaccustomed, the life rough. By the time we reached

port I thought I had had enough of the sea for ever. I got my discharge. When my savings began to give out I, in desperation, resumed the name of Trevider and presented myself to an old friend of my father in Sydney, and asked for a situation. From my reception by him, I concluded that the story of the London club had travelled far—even to Australia. I saw myself for ever branded as a cheat. I then planned my death.

"The next day I went to a lonely shore. In the pockets of the London suit which I was wearing I placed old letters addressed to me in the Temple, and a card requesting that my father in Cornwall be notified in case of my death. At some distance farther down the shore I hid the sea clothes of 'John Middleton.' I disrobed, leaving the garments of Cevil Trevider on the beach, beyond the reach of tide. I swam down to the farther shore, put on my old sailor things, and became for the remainder of my life John Middleton. Cecil Trevider was dead, drowned.

"I soon reshipped, cruising to New Zealand, Fiji, various South American ports, and eventually Canada. After a half-year in Canada I sailed for Charleston, South Carolina. By this time I had definitely decided to give up the sea. I hoped that my education and knowledge of law might be turned to account. But I had no credentials. I could not mention or prove my Oxford degree. I think I must have applied unsuccessfully for a position as clerk to every attorney in Charleston.

"In The Charleston News and Courier I read an account of a legal action conducted in the Charleston courts by Mr. Mean Brooks of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. I was impressed by the cleverness shown by Mr. Brooks. I went to call upon him, and requested him to let me study law with him for a year. It was

arranged. At the end of that year I was admitted to the bar of South Carolina. I have remained in the office of Mr. Brooks ever since. I had no love of the law, and therefore have been a failure as a barrister. I had no ambition in particular. I had an inherited passion for gambling. The South offers ample scope for this. This passion, if inherited by you, will have little opportunity to disclose itself in the life of struggle and hardship which I plan for you. . . ."

Here Jerry lifted his eyes from the letter for the first time. His thoughts went back. . . . His Solution—his adventure in Euston Road—his challenge to Fate. . . . Good God! the inherited instinct!

He, Jerry Trevider, had been the greatest gambler of them all. In him the Trevider trait had reached its meridian. . . . He saw it now.

His eyes again dropped to the document of his father. He read on:

"When you receive this letter I wish you to go to England. By then my father will probably be dead. If my brother Robert or my sister Felicity are at Tolvean, Trewarthenith, Cornwall, you will present to them the seal ring, separately enclosed. It was my grandfather's ring, given me on my twenty-first birthday. It will serve you as the sword and sandals of his father served Theseus.

"Let my life vindicate itself as an example. Be the antithesis of all I have been. If there is a life beyond —any survival of personality, any opportunity to serve those one's mortal heart yearned toward—then I, from beyond the veil, shall assist you as I may, guide you toward the goal I desire for you, lead you at last to the home of our forefathers, a more worthy

successor to the estate of our ancestors than I would have been.

"God grant me power after death."

"Power after death," Jerry repeated wonderingly, as he folded the discoloured sheets. To what degree had that prayer been answered? How much guidance had indeed come from his father? How maddeningly incomprehensible were life and death. Oh! the intricate weavings of Fate. In the most seemingly witless life-riddle there was probably always a definite design. There may have been a carefully conceived plan in all his own apparently chaotic affairs.

Had it not been for the actual impossibility to procure work, the lack of food, he would never have had the idea of the Solution. And only by doing the seemingly mad thing he had done, could his photograph have got into the papers; only by its appearance there could Aunt Felicity's attention have been fixed upon the indisputable Trevider features; only by Aunt Felicity's claim of him as her lost nephew could this final revelation have come.

In all probability he would never have returned to South Carolina. There were no longer any ties to draw him back. But for his amazing resemblance to his Cousin Monty, and Aunt Felicity's natural error in mistaking him for Monty, he would never have received his father's letter.

Read backward, the puzzles of life are solvable. One sees, in perspective, the meaning, the purpose. Nothing is inconsequential.

Fate—and who knows—perhaps his dead father—had been pushing him steadfastly toward Tolvean and his own.

Jerry was still too overwhelmed by the extraordinary revelations of the letter to think of the beautiful

vistas which were now mircaulously opened to him. He suddenly remembered the small box, and took from it an old seal ring. Then he thought of the patiently waiting Aunt Felicity—really and truly henceforth his very own Aunt Felicity. It seemed almost too wonderful. But before seeing Aunt Felicity he wanted to see another. He lit a candle and went down the stairs. He passed Aunt Felicity's door and descended to the hall.

Long rows of his ancestors flanked the walls on either side. He recalled his precipitate, ashamed flight past their seemingly accusing eyes, on his first night at Tolvean. Now he could gaze at them fearlessly, proudly.

He went to the far end by the entrance and held up the candle. Its rays illumined a young, winsome face. A boy's frank eyes looked lovingly into his own. The mobile lips flashed a welcoming smile.

Jerry felt a clutch in his throat, tears filled his eyes. "Father!" he cried.

All the lonely longing of the fatherless sounded in that yearning cry.

A few minutes later he was standing before Miss Felicity. He held out the old crested ring.

Miss Felicity stared as one beholding the dead.

"Where-where did you get it?"

"It was my father's," said Jerry. "Oh! Aunt Felicity, don't you grasp the truth—the marvellous, heavenly truth? You were right. Your heart was right. You knew. You instinctively felt the truth."

Aunt Felicity seemed stunned. "I can't understand. What is it, my dear? My head doesn't seem to work—"

Jerry seized her in his arms. He kissed her eyes, her cheeks, her mouth.

"Oh! dearest, blessedest, darlingest of all earthly aunts, don't you realize that I am your nephew?"

"But how-" began Miss Felicity, still too dazed

to reason or surmise.

"Read this," said Jerry. "We'll read it together. Start at the beginning, and don't look at the end till you get there."

They read, heads bowed together, Jerry's arm about her. They had not reached the second page before Miss Felicity grasped the truth. She turned and stared at Jerry, a radiant wonder shining in her eyes.

"Oh! my dear, dear boy," was all she could say, as she clasped his hand. Hungrily she turned back to her brother's letter. She read through silently to the end.

"My dreams!" She turned her tear-filled eyes to Jerry. "Year after year that same dream—Cecil before me—Cecil trying to tell me something. . . . Oh! now I realize. . . . My precious Cecil's boy—my own boy!"

"Aunt Felicity"—Jerry got up abruptly—"where's

Polly?"

"I think she's gone to bed. I'll call her. She must know. She must share the wonderful truth with us."

Jerry put a restraining hand on her arm. "Dearest, you won't mind if I see her first, see her alone, will you?" He did not wait for a reply.

Once in the corridor he stood indeterminate. The moment of which he had dreamt, which he had rehearsed a thousand times, which he had accustomed himself to think of as belonging to some far-distant year, was Here!

It had come so unannouncedly it found him unprepared. Even at dinner to-night the thought of Polly as his wife belonged so indisputably to a must-bepostponed future, that he had not permitted himself to more than brush, with the edge of a wing of thought, the rapturous possibility. The planned declaration to Polly had had in his thoughts the curtain raiser of wordly possessions and position achieved by longinspired years of labour. And now through the miraculous transformation wrought by a black tin box, by the magic of an old seal ring, he was in a position to declare himself without a second's delay. It smacked of genies and the Aladdin's lamp sort of thing. He could go at once to Polly and say that he was of her very blood, and the inheritor of the fairest acres in Cornwall. He could ask her to share with him for life the old home of their forefathers.

Yet he hesitated, delayed. The verity of that hesitation disclosed itself: He did not want to be accepted by Polly as Jerry Trevider. He wanted to be taken as Jerry Middleton. He wanted to see Polly evidence the true Trevider character—the trait of chance-it—the gambling instinct. He wanted her to love him enough to show her heart—still believing him a penniless American soldier of fortune, an insignificant employee of the shipping house of Boughton-Leigh. He wanted her to accept him for himself, to take him solely because she couldn't help it, because she must.

And—just as in the past he had had a punctilious sense of responsibility toward the name of Monty Trevider, a desire to play that rôle on the level, so now he had a sense of responsibility, pride, gratitude, and loyalty to the vanishing Jerry Middleton. Polly's acceptance, before she knew the truth, was a tribute which his entire being demanded should be given to the personal Jerry Middleton, whom he recognized would be for ever gone after to-night.

He walked to Polly's door. He rapped twice, and in tremulous tones gave the old password.

A match was struck. He heard Polly moving. In another instant she stood before him in a flung-on dressing-gown, her hair a chaotic mass of waves and curls, her cheeks pink, and her eyes as shining as his.

Jerry fumbled in a pocket. He fetched forth the

"fairy ring."

Polly silently held up the right hand, as she had so often done in the past. Jerry made no move. "Polly," said he, "you've another hand.

you?"

Polly's cheeks suddenly blanched. Her breathing grew quicker. Her eyelids drooped, the dimple near lip-corner seemed to twinkle.

"Couldn't you?" begged Jerry.

Her left hand twitched, then slowly rose and reached toward him.

He took it reverently, and slipped the ring on the fourth finger. He had meant to kiss it, but the left hand, the right hand of Polly had flown through the air, two arms were about his neck, and a soft voice somewhere near his heart was saying:

"Old cat eyes!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

It was surely the tiniest Christmas tree in the world. Jerry had spent all morning searching in the Tolvean woods for just the perfectly symmetrical tree of the required Lilliputian dimensions. It was placed in the centre of the largest table to be found in the house, the placing of which had necessitated the removal of Polly's desk into Jerry's adjoining room.

With complete preoccupation Jerry attached to the tree a glowing ball of gold, then one of silver, another of blue, and a last of scarlet. On the very tip of top he balanced and wired a tiny dove. Slender streamers of silver tinsel were draped then swirled round the base of the tree. A few candles were distributed here and there. It was complete. Jerry felt the pride of a great artist.

"Now Polly, you may open your eyes and look." He stepped back with a fatuous smile.

Polly turned her head on the pillow and gazed at the masterpiece.

"Oh!! Oh!!! It's just too booful, Jerry-darlin'. Won't he be surprised in the morning? Oh! Jerry, I think we might let him see it to-night. He'll have forgotten it by to-morrow."

"No." Jerry was firm. "Christmas is Christmas, and there's no forestalling. Now I must put the gifts round it."

He disappeared into his room and was busily engaged for some time, opening packages, reinspecting their contents, then doing them all up again with red ribbon and appropriate messages. Here was the box from Page, Leek, & Page containing the string of pearls for Polly. There was the lovely old cameo brooch he had found at the curiosity shop in Penzance, for Aunt Felicity. This package held a Shetland wool shawl for Paynter. A long box contained President Eliot's five feet of books for Wiggs, and there was a fat bundle of yards and yards of black silk for Miss Winnie Wiggs. (With happy ignorance, Jerry had purchased enough for two and a half frocks.)

And here in a little box was an absurdly tiny garment, all hand embroidered and as sheer as a cobweb. Polly would be surprised at the good taste he had exhibited! He didn't know how surprised Polly would be when she saw the size; it was small, to be sure, but it was a frock that could under no possible chance of the most precocious development be worn by the one for whom it was intended before another Christmas.

Jerry blissfully carried in the gifts one by one to make them seem more. He distributed them about the tiny tree, which was to be the heart-centre of all their Christmas joy.

"Come quick, Jerry!" summoned Polly from the bed. "I think he's about to smile."

Jerry dropped his package and rushed as one would to see a great and evanescent phenomenon of Nature. Polly whispered:

"He's having one of his little roll-eye-dreams, and he nearly always smiles then."

Jerry bent over and stared fixedly at the wee, crumpled, pink, featureless countenance pillowed on Polly's arm. The two parents remained breathlessly expectant for a full minute, watching the eyes roll wildly about in the opened but sleeping lids, showing at times nothing but the whites in the most ghastly

fashion. At last, as a probable small pressure of wind occurred in the tiny tummy, the infant's lips writhed in the ghost of a smile.

The young mother gave a deep ecstatic sigh. Words would have been inadequate for such a moment of overpowering fruition.

After an awed silence she turned to her husband. "Jerry, dear, do you know, I think he must really be a holy child. You see, coming so near Christmas. . . ."

"Of course he's a holy child if you're his mother."
"Jerry!" cried Polly, with sudden stupefaction,
"have you realized this poor child doesn't even know
that Columbus discovered America? Oh! think of
all he doesn't know. He doesn't know of the Ice Age!
He's got to learn all about George Washington and
Eve and Queen Elizabeth and Carpentier and
Napoleon and Mrs. Asquith and the Prince of Wales
and Woodrow Wilson and God and Clemenceau and
Noah and Lloyd George and The Irish and Winston
Churchill. Oh! dear. Why, it's enough to drive the
poor little thing perfectly raving crazy." Polly's eyes
were dilated with horror.

Jerry refused to take the future agonies of his son too seriously. "Anyway, he won't have them all chucked at him in a bunch—that's some comfort. We'll start off gently with some old scandal like 'The dish ran away with the spoon,' and lead up gently to Mrs. Asquith and the Flood."

"But just think—the war. This poor child hasn't even heard about the war. . . And he lying here looking so like a great general. He does look like a general, doesn't he, Jerry?"

"Spittin' image of Foch," declared Jerry solemnly. "Oh, I do hope he will be brave like his father,"

sighed Polly, "and not be scared to death of bats and spiders like his poor silly mudder."

There was a knock at the door. Wiggs entered.

"The steward, sir, would like to see you below. And the staff send their compliments, and hope you'll honour them by sharing their celebration in the old kitchen for a few minutes. And, sir"—Wiggs produced from behind his back a small oblong box—"I've made so bold as to get a trifle for Master Cecil's first Christmas."

"How splendid of you, Wiggs!" cried Polly. "Open it, Jerry. He's asleep and can't see it."

Jerry opened and held up a toothifier—a lovely bauble of mother-of-pearl and silver, with bells and a whistle. It seemed to bring before one a convincing vision of actual teeth to come. Jerry felt like giving a cheer. He shook the embarrassed Wiggs violently by the shoulders. Then, without letting go, he turned to Polly and asked: "Shall I tell him now?" Polly wagged her head affirmatively.

"Wiggs"—Jerry paused; it was a tremendous moment to him—"Wiggs, old man, Miss Polly and I want you to be Cecil's godfather." It was out.

Wiggs reeled a little.

"Oh, sir! But, sir—but really, sir—"

"Now don't be an ass," advised Jerry.

"But, sir—it's—I'm afraid it's not done. I fear it would be misunderstood. . . . It's too great—far too great an honour. You see, sir, the countryside wouldn't understand. It would appear to them as—if I may so put it—American democracy. For your own sake, I'm afraid I must decline."

"Hang the countryside!" said Jerry. "I'm not asking you as my servant. Good God! Wiggs, I'm asking my best friend to be the godfather of my son. I reckon any man's got a right to do that."

"You're too good, sir," stammered Wiggs, his eyes looking tragically human and glistening.

"If he takes after his mother, to say nothing of his father, he'll be all-fired proud—when he gets old enough to be proud—of his godfather. Look here, Wiggs, Miss Trevider knows all about this and she approves. She's to be godmother. Now what do you say?"

"Thanks, sir!" Wiggs bowed and fled, before all self-possession deserted him.

"Pure gold," commented Jerry. "Gold and diamonds clean through. And to-morrow, after the gifts have been handed out, he'll hear about the rest." Jerry had arranged to give a charming old cottage near the mansion to Wiggs and Miss Winnie Wiggs for life possession.

Miss Winnie was at that moment among the merry-makers down in the old kitchen. This kitchen was now used only at the Christmas season; it alone possessed a sufficiently huge fireplace to hold the Christmas Eve Yule log, or "mock," as Paynter termed it.

When Jerry unobservedly entered, a gay scene greeted him.

The oak beams and panelling of the old kitchen were garlanded with greens, holly, and mistletoe. The candles had all been extinguished, and only the warm glow of the Yule log lighted the room. The game of "snapdragon" was in merry progress. A quantity of raisins in a huge bowl had been covered with brandy, then ignited, and Wiggs, Miss Winnie Wiggs, Old Stevens, Young Stevens, Trevorrow, Paynter, Alice, the old butler, the tweeny, cook, the scullery wench, the coachman, groom, and the new chauffeur were all making laughing efforts to grasp a raisin by thrusting a hand through the blue flames.

When Jerry was discovered, the gay abandon became

hushed. The steward, striking an attitude, delivered an evidently carefully rehearsed speech. He was speaking for the tenantry of Tolvean. He said many noble things of the ten-day-old heir, of the loyalty of the tenants toward him, of their good wishes for his future, and concluded by presenting in their name a handsome silver tray properly inscribed to the young master, with the agent's and all the tenants' names engraved in full.

Wiggs was then seized with a coughing spell, and Jerry surmised he was to be again addressed. In true declamtory style, reminiscent of his old school-master days, Wiggs, in remarkably imposing English, spoke, as he said, "on behalf of the staff." After his oratory had been brought to a successful conclusion, he presented the gift of the servants—a silver porridge bowl and spoon.

Jerry responded by wringing the hands of all violently. He then suggested that Wiggs fetch down the gramophone so they might dance. He was sure from Paynter's expression she was longing to fling a foot. This produced much masculine merriment and feminine giggling.

Then Jerry was asked to sample the punch brewed by the butler, assisted by Miss Winnie Wiggs. They drank to the King, then to the master, then to the young master—God bless 'im!

"And," added Jerry, "aren't you going to drink to the mistress and Miss Trevider?" Indeed they would.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" almost sang Jerry as he left the room with full heart and hands.

Polly was overcome when she saw the baby's treasures.

"Aren't they all just too bully?" asked Jerry. "Lord! It sure gets my goat. And there was that

old blighter, Trevorrow, drinking to the baby's health as if he'd lay down his life for him."

"And so he would, I'm sure," said Polly.

"I'm awfully glad I asked him to come back. What does it matter if he isn't the best carpenter in the world? He's ours. Polly," he added thoughtfully, "I believe I'm getting English. I begin to see the relative value of things more clearly. Why, bless you, the very imperfections of England are beautiful. It's the beauty of the imperfect mellow. Now a young apple is round, firm, and green; a perfectly ripe apple is not perhaps so flawless—it may have a soft spot or two—but it's mellow and it's sweet—oh! it's sweet.

"Of course efficiency and insistence on results are all right, and getting the last drop out of everything and the break-neck rush to make a fortune are probably praiseworthy, but these things aren't the sole objects for which we were born. The English realize that life was intended to be lived. After a man has made a fairly sufficient amount over here, he retires and enjoys it—he has time to enjoy his sports and his fads, has time to get acquainted with his family, to cultivate his friends, to read, to walk, to picnic, to tea. It all makes for the grace and charm of living. Men aren't mere business machines here; they are delightful, social, human beings.

"Yes, I've changed. I don't give a hang now if Stevens gets only a peck of potatoes where, with more efficient methods, he might get a peck and a half. Stevens gets all the potatoes we need, and he loves the place, and he's ours.

"And this thing of entail is fine. Now I feel that Tolvean is a trust which I hold for my son. I'm not going to throw money away trying to out-bluff my neighbours, or burn my trees, or let my bridges fall down, or let my cottages rot. I'm going to husband

all these things carefully for my son, and he'll do the same for his-just as all our forefathers have sacredly carried out their obligations to succeeding generations. It's right to instil stability into the individual, force him to recognize the obligation of father to sonfamily.

"But I can't stand here and shoot off my mouth. I've got a thousand things to do. This piece of mistletoe, for instance." Jerry got upon a chair, stretched across Polly and the baby, and suspended the branch from the tester just over Polly's head. "'And any lord of creation may kiss the fair lady beneath." He stooped and kissed Polly.

"What are the plans for to-morrow?" asked Polly.

"Christmas gift distribution in here, where you can see it, in the morning. Then to church with Aunt Felicity! Sir Felicity to dinner at one."

"Turkey and sausage and bread sauce," supplied Polly, "and wee mince pies and plum-pudding alight, and hothouse grapes, saved especially by Stevens, and crackers to pull!"

"And at night I'm giving the dinner to the tenants at the 'Pig and Whistle.' Then on Boxing Day weour farmers and neighbouring farmers—course with the greyhounds. That night there's the big coursing dinner at 'The Queen's, where I'm to sing-sing 'John Peel' and 'My Old Shako.' And Wiggs, by my special request, has been invited. He has confessed he can sing! What do you think he's going to sing?"

"'I'll Sing thee Songs of Araby," ventured Polly. "Wrong! Better still, 'Come Rest in this Bosom, My Own Stricken Dear."

Polly shrieked with laughter. "Will Sir Wilfred be there?"

He'll render, 'Drink to Me only with Thine Eves.' "

"I wish Aunt Felicity could hear him. Doesn't it seem too absurdly wonderful to think she has really accepted him? Poor Sir Wilfred! It was the only possible balm for his pride after the Cooleying of Celia. At any rate, he will now at last be allied to the House of Trevider. And Aunt Felicity told me this afternoon that she had just received a letter saying he had decided to accept the offer of the A. and O.—he's going to sell out to them and retire."

"Then he and Aunt Felicity can have their year of travel, and she'll see all the places she's dreamed of—protected by a man."

"Then Sir Wilfred is going to write his memoirs! Now, Jerry, tell me why is it no Englishman of importance can *help* blossoming into a memoir?"

"Search me! Sort of inevitable blooming of the century plant. I'm awfully glad Monty can come on to the wedding. I've naturally got some curiosity to see him?" A sound of singing came from without. "What's that?"

"Oh! The Christmas Waits." Polly clapped her hands. "Jerry-love, open the window quick. I'll cover Cecil and myself up."

Jerry leaned out the window. Below, under the old tree where the rooks came at eventide, stood the group of carol singers; an old lantern threw grotesque shadows of their bodies on hedge and house wall. A bent old man was playing a violin.

"It's Blue-nose Billy, the blind milk-man!" exclaimed Polly. "Oh! Jerry, it's all just the same as when I was a little girl."

> "God rest you, merry gentlemen, Let nothing you dismay, For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Was born upon this day. . . ."

The words and harmonies of the beautiful old carol seemed more magical than ever to Polly.

"Isn't it too heavenly? Come and hold my hand tight, Jerry. Christmas in England is surely the most beautiful thing in the world."

When the next verse began, Polly joined in softly.

"In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
This blessed Babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn,
The whilst his mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn."

Polly held her own blessed babe so close it awoke and blinked, deliberating whether to howl or not. It decided to whimper. "Hush, darling, hush." Polly patted it. "Listen to the pretty music."

Cecil listened and heard:

"When Christ was born of Mary free, In Bethlehem in that fair citie, Angels sang there with mirth and glee In Excelsis Gloria."

The singing stopped. The carolers had evidently been invited in to partake of the cheer in the old kitchen.

Polly wondered if anybody in the world had ever been just as happy as she. With her arch corner-eye glance she turned to Jerry:

"Who' you love?"

Jerry, brows frowning, appeared to be weighing the question seriously. His face cleared.

"Fate!" cried he exultantly.

And he enfolded the two most precious gifts of Fate in his arms.





OCH I'M Milde

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